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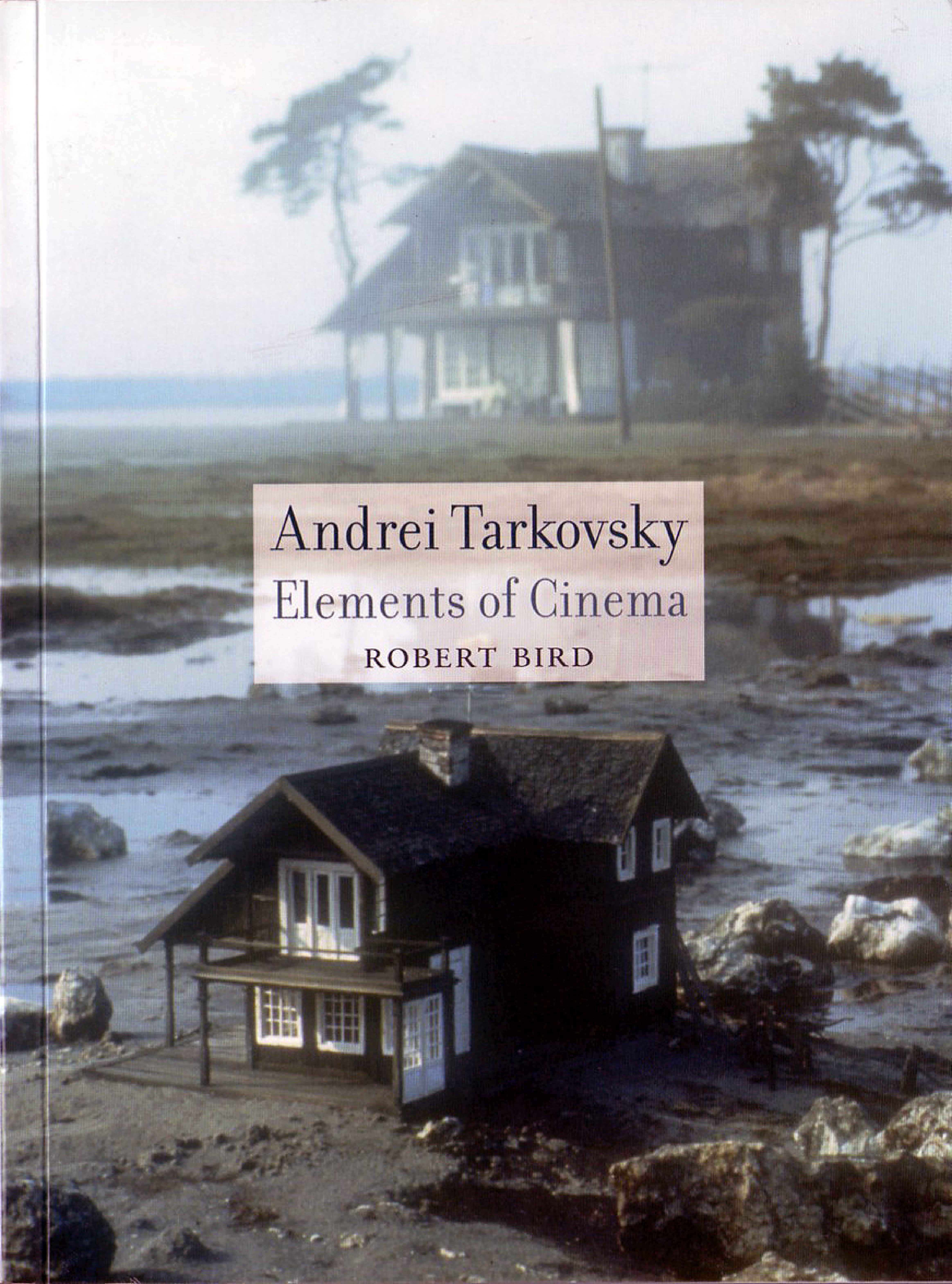

Andrei Tarkovsky

Elements of Cinema

ROBERT BIRD

'A major contribution to the literature on the filmmaker. Robert Bird is thoroughly familiar with Russian sources unavailable to English readers and he has a remarkable sensitivity to the nuances of cinematic construction. His writing is lucid and consistently illuminates Tarkovksy's central preoccupation – "the tragic failure of spirituality . . . in conflict with its natural conditions".'

—P. Adams Sitney, Professor of Visual Arts, Princeton University, and author of *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943–2000*

A revered filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky is secure in the long and illustrious line of Russian masters in arts and letters. Linking cinematic technique to broader questions of meaning and interpretation, Robert Bird offers a wholly original investigation into the aesthetic principles of Tarkovsky's filmmaking. While providing a comprehensive analysis of his work in all media, including radio, theatre and opera, Bird argues that Tarkovsky was most at home in the cinema. Accordingly, the author dwells chiefly on Tarkovsky's major films: *Ivan's Childhood*, *Andrei Rublev*, *Solaris*, *Mirror*, *Stalker*, *Nostalghia* and *Sacrifice*. With its wealth of film stills and photographs, this book is a key text for all admirers of Tarkovsky and European cinema.

Robert Bird is Associate Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago, and the author of *Andrei Rublev* (2005), a monograph on Tarkovsky's film of that name.

With 106 illustrations, 32 in colour

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Andrei Tarkovsky

Andrei Tarkovsky

Elements of Cinema

Robert Bird

REAKTION BOOKS

To the memory of my grandparents.

And now, in the future times,
Like a child, I stand up in the stirrups.

Arsenii Tarkovsky

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Abbreviations

ATI	*Andrei Tarkovsky Interviews*, ed. John Gianvito (Jackson, MS, 2006)
CS	Andrei Tarkovsky, *Collected Screenplays*, trans. William Powell and Natasha Synessios (London, 1999)
DB	*Andrei Tarkovsky: A Poet in the Cinema*, dir. Donatella Baglivo (1984).
IL	*Instant Light: Tarkovsky Polaroids*, ed. Giovanni Chriamonte and Andrey A. Tarkovsky, Foreword by Tonino Guerra (London, 2004)
MF	A. M. Sandler, ed., *Mir i fil'my Andreia Tarkovskogo: Razmyshleniia, issledovaniia, vospominaniia, pis'ma* (Moscow, 1991)
MG	Andrej Tarkowskij, *'Der Speigel': Novelle, Arbeitstagebücher und Materialen zur Entstehung des Films*, trans. Kurt Baudisch and Ute Spengler (Berlin, 1993)
MJ	*Zerkalo* [in Japanese] (Tokyo, 2000)
Mosfilm	Archive of Mosfilm Studios (Moscow)
OS	Ol'ga Surkova, *S Tarkovskim i o Tarkovskom*, 2nd edn (Moscow, 2005)
OT	*O Tarkovskom: Vospominaniia v dvukh knigakh*, ed. M. A. Tarkovskaia (Moscow, 2002)
OZ	Marina Tarkovskaia, *Oskolki zerkala*, 2nd edn (Moscow, 2006)
RGAKFD	Rossisskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kino-fotodokumentov (Moscow)
RGALI	Rossisskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (Moscow)
ST	Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (Austin, TX, 1986)
TT	*Time of Travel* (*Tempo di viaggio*), dir. Andrei Tarkovsky (1980/1983)
UR	Andrei Tarkovskii, *Uroki rezhissury: Uchebnoe posobie* (Moscow, 1993)
ZV	Andrei Tarkovskii, *Zapechatlennoe vremia* in *Andrei Tarkovskii: Arkhivy. Dokumenty. Vospominaniia*, ed. P. D. Volkova (Moscow, 2002)

Introduction: Elements of Cinema

In his memoir *Safe Conduct* the poet Boris Pasternak tells how he sacrificed a career in music because, unlike his mentor Aleksandr Scriabin, he lacked perfect pitch. Some 50 years later the young Andrei Tarkovsky, himself an avid devotee of Pasternak's poetry, likewise passed up music, eventually settling on the cinema as his *métier*. He was never able to explain exactly what had drawn him to the cinema. Nonetheless, it was here that Tarkovsky discovered his own form of perfect pitch, manifested as an unerring aesthetic sensibility and acute responsiveness to cultural impulses, which made each of his seven feature films resonate as a major cultural event in the USSR and throughout the world.

Tarkovsky's renown began with *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), an orphaned project that was entrusted to the novice director as a last resort. Tarkovsky shot the film in the fluid manner typical of the Soviet New Wave during the Thaw period that followed Nikita Khrushchev's condemnation of Joseph Stalin in 1956. In the West, Tarkovsky's debut joined such films as Mikhail Kalatozov's *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957) and Grigorii Chukhrai's *The Ballad of a Soldier* (1959) in providing unsuspected glimpses of the Soviet people's suffering during World War II and their potential rejuvenation, represented equally by the films' young protagonists and bold, self-confident aesthetic manner. Both at home and abroad, *Ivan's Childhood* captured the spirit of the moment, and at the tender age of 30, Tarkovsky found himself lauded at premiere European festivals, discussed by leading European intellectuals and pushed to the forefront of Soviet culture.

Unlike his closest peers, however, Tarkovsky refused to allow this acclaim to drown out the more subtle promptings of his individual artistic voice. Over the next quarter-century Tarkovsky would often find himself at loggerheads with the system that sought above all to protect its own smooth functioning. His next film, the ambitious epic *Andrei Rublëv* (completed in 1966), was not only an instant classic; it was also immediately received as a kind of gospel for the Soviet intelligentsia, as imprinting their rather vague spiritual yearnings together with their sense of oppression, ennui and possibility. Of course, *Andrei Rublëv*, like Tarkovsky's subsequent films, was rendered doubly inaccessible by its experimental narrative structure and by the restrictions on its distribution. However, the system's clumsy efforts to prevent any exhibition of the film – completed after Khrushchev was removed from power and the Thaw ended, the film was shelved for over three years until a copy was mysteriously released to the West and shown at Cannes – only heightened its cultural resonances. *Andrei Rublëv* became the cinematic equivalent of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, a novel that had inspired its difficult narrative structure. As with Pasternak, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature after *Doctor Zhivago* was banned in the USSR, and as with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who refused to be satisfied with the limited success of his officially recognized *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962), both at home and abroad Tarkovsky's travails endowed him with unparalleled cultural authority. Historical study will show that, even under prohibition, *Andrei Rublëv* shaped many of the best Soviet (indeed, Soviet-bloc) films of the late 1960s; after its success at Cannes this influence was extended worldwide. Each of Tarkovsky's subsequent Soviet films – *Solaris* (1972), *Mirror* (1974) and *Stalker* (1979) – played a similar role within the USSR, as a bell-wether of the social mood and an outlet for the intelligentsia's inchoate creative and spiritual yearnings. Each was received in the West as a revelation, confirming Tarkovsky's status as the only Russian filmmaker since Eisenstein who could rival Russia's great writers and composers in the power of their epic narratives, at once deeply national and profoundly universal.

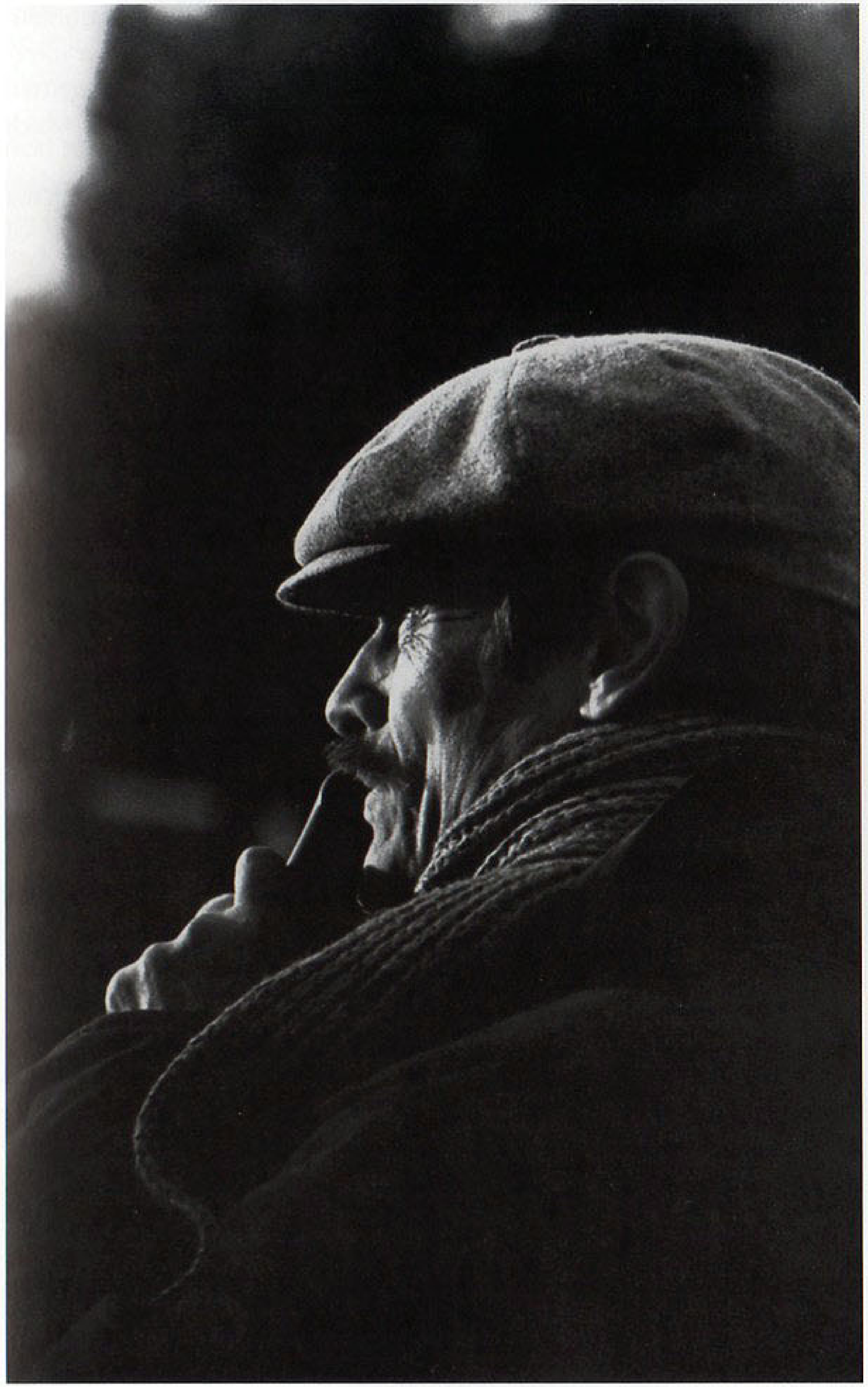
Tarkovsky departed from the Soviet Union in 1982 in order to shoot the film *Nostalghia*, a joint Soviet-Italian production that ostensibly concerned the peculiar heartache experienced by Russians when separated from their homeland. Tarkovsky's temporary estrangement became a permanent 'defection' in 1984, an event that in some respects marked the Soviet system's final refusal to be rejuvenated from within, by its brightest talents. It is a poignant detail that Tarkovsky's death from cancer at the very end of 1986 coincided with the beginning of Mikhail Gorbachev's liberalization of the Soviet Union (*perestroika*), which would quickly lead to the demise of the country, and to Tarkovsky's enthusiastic acceptance into the official canon of Russian culture. In the changed political climate Tarkovsky's films became a staple of perestroika cinema and television; today they remain seminal components of the Russian cultural identity.

In many respects Tarkovsky's films have continued to be defined by their Cold War politicization. This is especially true of Tarkovsky's final film *Sacrifice* (1986), which has often been presented as his testament to the world, a warning of impending disaster stemming from nuclear war, capitalist materialism and modern dislocation, perceived messages that were buttressed by the publication in 1986 of his book *Sculpting in Time*. These collected essays, written or dictated over the course of his career but heavily revised in his European exile, convey an increasingly hieratic tone that has found a willing audience both in the post-Soviet landscape and in the West. Given this history, it is no great surprise that Tarkovsky has been enlisted as a prophet: of Chernobyl, of his own death, of the collapse of the Soviet Union or of the impending apocalypse. However, to look in Tarkovsky's films for sybilline predictions is sorely to mistake their nature. Tarkovsky sought not to impose an interpretive scheme upon reality, but to imprint or record it together with all its contingency and potentiality; Tarkovsky was not an *orator*, but an *observer* and a *listener*.

It is Tarkovsky's sense of cinematic pitch, rather than any discursive 'meaning' of his films, that is my main focus in this book. I progress through ten elements of his cinematic aesthetic, following a roughly chronological examination of his films. The first three chapters (grouped together as 'Earth') address the material conditions of Tarkovsky's cinematic world: the system in which he worked, the spaces he constructed, and the screen that he endowed with such expressive depth. The discussion in this section is centred on Tarkovsky's early films, including *Steamroller and Violin*, *Ivan's Childhood* and *Andrei Rublëv*. The next three chapters ('Fire') deal with the discursive aspects of Tarkovsky's films: the interaction of word and image (*Andrei Rublëv*), of story (*Solaris*), and of the social imaginary (*Mirror*). Chapters Seven to Nine ('Water') focus on the structure of the image itself, which imprints sensorial experience and time itself in the single continuum of the shot, which Tarkovsky placed at the centre of his cinematic aesthetics. This section deals mostly with *Stalker* and *Nostalghia*, in addition to Tarkovsky's work in theatre (*Hamlet* and *Boris Godunov*) and documentary film (*Time of Travel*). In the final chapter, focusing on *Sacrifice*, I address the intangible *atmosphere* of Tarkovsky's cinematic world, which imbues the spatial, discursive and aesthetic conditions of his films with the poignant sense of potentiality. The cumulative result of these analyses, I hope, is a thorough account of Tarkovsky's approach to film-making that will illumine individual films while uncovering the basic elements of his creative project.

Andrei Tarkovsky's seven full-length films have sometimes been revered as a sacred septateuch on a par with the masterpieces of Russia's novelists and composers. His work may rank as the single most important influence on the style of contemporary European film, with its open narrative structures and slow, pensive mood. Yet Tarkovsky has remained an elusive subject for reflection and analysis, and his name is surprisingly rare in discourse on film, whether popular or academic. This book is intended to help rectify this situation by providing rigorous analyses of his films and other creative projects. One of my major arguments is that Tarkovsky has in part been a victim of his reputation as more than a 'mere' movie director. True, Tarkovsky also staged works for the radio, theatre and opera, and was in addition an accomplished actor, screenwriter, film theorist and diarist; I discuss most of these facets of his talent in their place. However, my claim is that Tarkovsky was a filmmaker before all else, and my intention is to examine what his cinema reveals about the medium in which he worked.

Despite a widespread sense that Tarkovsky achieved something unique in and for cinema, opinions differ widely on what and how valuable it was. One could legitimately see his films, for better or worse, as attempts to justify his youthful declaration that 'Cinema is high art not entertainment'.[1] In particular, compared to outcome- and income-driven genre movies, Tarkovsky's stories and characters sometimes seem like mere occasions for showing earth-stained objects, burning buildings, waterlogged landscapes and, perhaps most fundamentally, an invisible but poignant *atmosphere*. The thought that Tarkovsky's cinematic work is based on an examination (or celebration) of the four basic elements of earth, fire, water and air can be expressed in rather banal ways, for instance in Donatella Baglivo's documentary *Andrei Tarkovsky: A Poet in the Cinema*, where footage of Tarkovsky lounging about in trees is interspersed with shots of streams, moss and furry animals. However, the recognition of something *elemental* in Tarkovsky's films has also been



Andrei Tarkovsky
(photograph
by Grigoriy
Verkhovskiy)

the basis of such illuminating explorations as Chris Marker's documentary *A Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenievich* (1999) and the major interpretive essays by Slavoj Žižek and Fredric Jameson, who have written stirringly of the way Tarkovsky's 'camera tracks the moments in which the elements speak', which allows it to probe 'the truth of mosses'.

For Jameson, however, the elemental character of Tarkovsky's cinema implies a lack of sophistication and a naive belief in the objectivity of the cinematic image:

> The deepest contradiction in Tarkovsky is [. . .] that offered by a valorization of nature without human technology achieved by the highest technology of the photographic apparatus itself. No reflexivity acknowledges this second hidden presence, thus threatening to transform Tarkovskian nature-mysticism into the sheerest ideology.[2]

Could it be that Tarkovsky's desire was to chase the genie of spirituality back into the bottle of modernity by using the most modern of the arts, and that, purporting to capture the objective flow of time, his trademark long-takes merely showcase the virtuosity of the filmmaker?

The problem with Jameson's charge is not so much that it ignores the conspicuously metacinematic passages in Tarkovsky's *Mirror*, where the prologue begins with a TV set and ends with the shadow of a boom microphone, and where the documentary sequences foreground the figure of the cameraman. Nor is the problem that Jameson ignores the self-referential 'AT' monogram throughout *Stalker* and the episode where the Stalker's wife directly addresses the camera. The problem is that Tarkovsky's entire cinematic project was aimed precisely at exploring the cinematic apparatus and investigating its impact upon human experience – as much sensory as intellectual and spiritual. Tarkovsky's 'mysticism' can only be assessed through his technique; his cinema of the elements requires consideration of the elements of his cinema. Vadim Iusov, the cameraman for Tarkovsky's first four films, has remarked that, in modernity generally and in cinema in particular, 'scientific and technical progress has for the first time touched upon the sphere of the spiritual activity of humanity'.[3] Tarkovsky was acutely conscious of his precedents, believing that in cinema 'there is nothing more to invent and accumulate: the earth has already been divided from the waters'.[4] This not only means that technology has spiritual significance, but also that henceforth spiritual matters must be seen in the light of technology.

Thus I believe it possible both to take seriously the spiritual claims made on behalf of Tarkovsky's films and to analyse these films on rigorous aesthetic criteria; anything less would be to do them a grave injustice.

The power of Tarkovsky's films lies not in their capture of the mystical presence of nature or Russia or what have you, but in the way they make the elements of cinema into conditions of the new, achieved in the spectator through the screen's mediation. As early as 1962, Tarkovsky had stated his intention to base his work on the problem of 'the relationship between spectator and artist',[5] thereby implying that he would not attempt to portray the 'earth' and the 'nation' as essentialized landscape or human mass but precisely as a flat screen that facilitates encounters. True, early on he viewed this relationship in rather didactic terms, calling upon the cinema industry to take up 'the development of spectators' aesthetic taste' in order to create 'the most advanced cinema in the world' and fulfil 'the aesthetic tasks set before the art of cinema by the Communist Party'.[6] More typically, however, Tarkovsky gave a purely aesthetic account of the problem: 'Cinema must not explain but act upon the spectator's feelings, so that the awakened emotion might give an impulse to thought.'[7] Slavoj Žižek has written that 'Tarkovsky's cinematic texture undermines his own explicit ideological project',[8] but I argue that Tarkovsky's only real project was precisely the creation of this cinematic texture. As filmmaker Aleksei German has said, Tarkovsky was not a 'great thinker' but a 'great practitioner'.[9] Nor was Tarkovsky a political or philosophical filmmaker. He made little overt comment on the Soviet system; his loudest may well have been the poster of Stalin which is fleetingly glimpsed in *Mirror* as the camera pans obliquely through a printing plant. Instead, the earth was for him the set of spatial and social constraints that condition temporal existence and its capture on film. His films are a crucible of ideology and of the entire social imaginary, which incinerate upon re-entering the time of human life and the indeterminate space of the human body. I argue that Tarkovsky never lost sight of the fact that he showed the world not as it is, but as it appears when distorted by refractive media, as if through a film of water. The fourth natural element, air, is most closely linked to the ineffable atmosphere of human life in time, but this, I argue, is precisely a sustaining condition that always remains beyond direct representation.

Late in life Tarkovsky described himself as 'a poet rather than a cinematographer', yet in the same breath rejected the 'so-called "poetic cinema" where everything is deliberately made incomprehensible' (ST

221). In fact, the prevalence of atmosphere over space, story or image clearly associates Tarkovsky with the rubric of poetic cinema, a concept that continues to enjoy wide currency despite its inherent vagueness. It is common to see poetic cinema as a distinct *genre*, which displays a stable structure and performs a specific social function (i.e., that of elite cinema). However, theorists of poetic cinema have frequently defined it as the very *essence* of the cinematic medium. The coiners of the term in the early 1920s, French critics Louis Delluc and Jean Epstein, regarded poetic or 'pure' cinema as that which captured the flow of life, as if the bobbins of film partook of an eternally continuous flow of images. Cinema was the closest material approximation to Plato's concept of time as a 'moving image of eternity'. Practically, pure cinema could mean any number of things. In Epstein's 1928 film *The Fall of the House of Usher* the poetic quality can be attributed to everything from the supernatural narrative to the incorporation of poetry (from Poe's story). It is curious, though, that Epstein – like Tarkovsky after him – showed a particular fascination with the natural flows of water, fire and wind. One sees here such peculiarly 'Tarkovskian' features as the curtains blowing into a room, as if admitting an alien presence, or a picture frame filling with fire. Yet if these shots reflect a startling belief in the power of cinema to channel fundamental forces of human reality and thereby transform the human world, they also measure this mystical aspiration against the representational limits of the medium. The tension between the intimation of metaphysical presence and consciousness of its mechanical representation is what Delluc and Epstein termed *photogénie* – the peculiar power of the world on-screen.

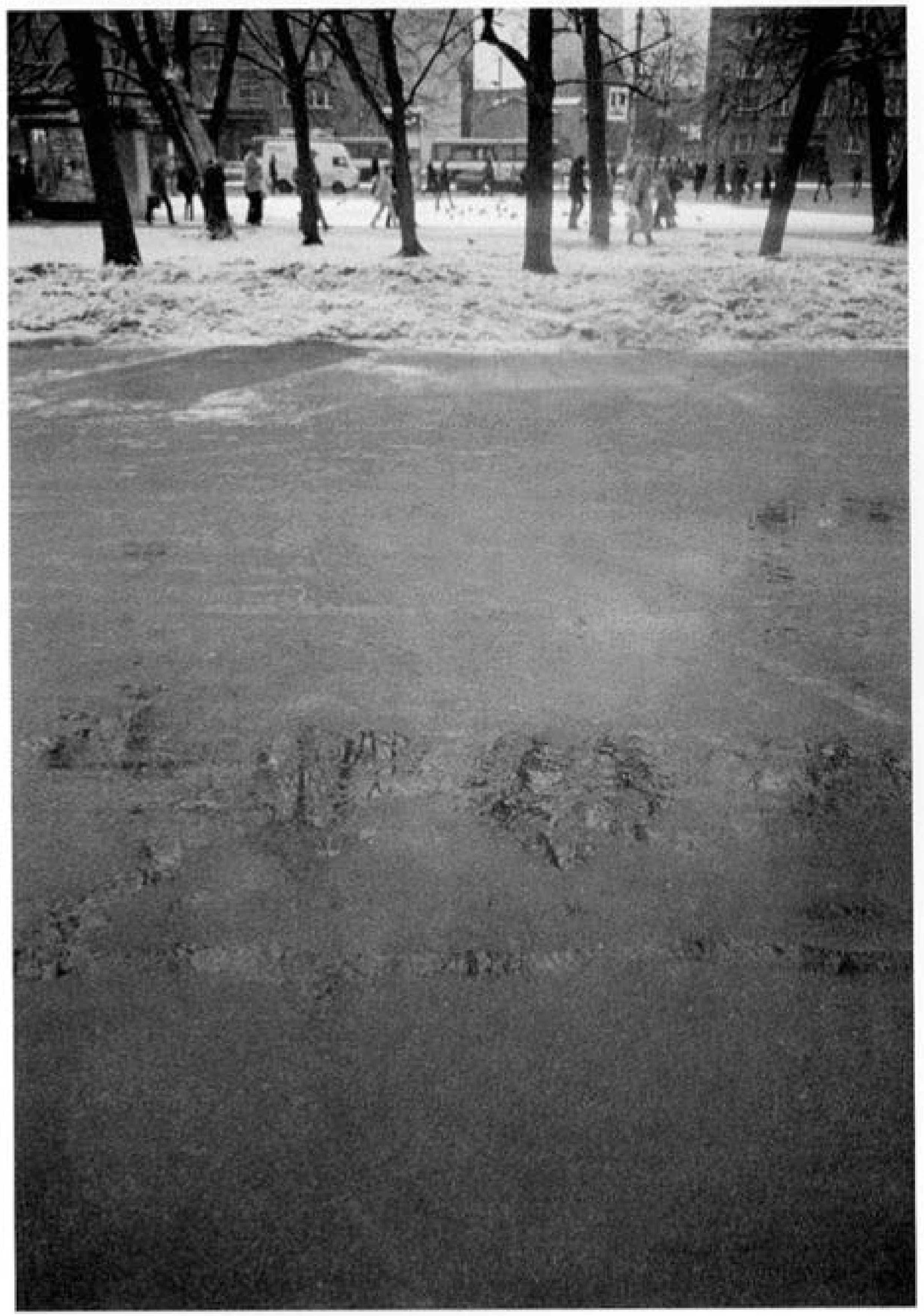
Early Russian film theorists responded warmly to the concept of 'poetic cinema'. In addition to defining it in terms of medium specificity, however, the Russians demonstrated a marked tendency to link poetic cinema to a particular treatment of narrative. The idea of a qualitatively different kind of cinema plot appeared as early as 1913 in a private letter of the young Boris Pasternak, who remarked: 'cinema perverts the core of the drama because it is called upon to express what is true in it, its surrounding plasma. Let it photograph not tales, but the atmospheres of tales.'[10] This statement was echoed in 1928 by critic Viktor Shklovsky, who commented that the filmmakers Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg (known as the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, or FEKS) 'film the air around their subject'.[11] Not content with such breezily metaphorical descriptions, Boris Eikhenbaum suggested that the unique province of the cinema was a distinct narrative temporality, 'as if, after reading a novel, you have dreamt it'.[12] In the best works of early Soviet cinema, such as Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926) and Dovzhenko's early films *Arsenal* (1929) and *Earth* (1930), critic Adrian Piotrovsky saw the rise of an 'emotional cinema' and a 'lyrical' cinema, dominated by the close-up and long take.[13] Perhaps more important than any particular technique, however, is the way that these films shifted the centre of the film's meaningfulness from the story to the viewer's creative reconstruction of it. Alexander Bakshy saw poetic cinema as rejecting the model of representation and revealing instead the modes in which we *present* the world to each other.[14] 'In general', Shklovsky agreed, 'the point is not the structure of the montage, but the method of the artist's attitude towards nature, in the type of attention which he teaches the viewer.'[15]

The concept of narrative thus reconciles the two major conceptualizations of poetic cinema – as a discrete genre (among many) and as the purest manifestation of the cinematic medium – by focusing attention on cinema's use of temporal form to cultivate modes of attending to the world. The idea of poetic cinema owed much to Henri Bergson's philosophy of time, though Bergson himself rejected cinema because of its inherent need to convert the seamless flow of lived time into a sequence of frozen instants. This distinction – between the illusion of continuity and the actual discontinuity of the cinema apparatus – has replayed itself over and over in the history of cinema aesthetics. A new beginning has been marked by the work of Gilles Deleuze, who, by rejecting the simplistic bipolarity of continuity/discontinuity and reality/representation, captures the complex interaction of image and world as a constituent element of time itself. Deleuze's analysis of the time-image is of particular importance for understanding Tarkovsky, who consistently defined the basic element of his cinema as time. However, I believe that the resolution of this dilemma – and the peculiar temporality of Tarkovsky's works – can be formulated most precisely in the broader aesthetic framework of narrative. The cinematic apparatus merely internalizes the fundamental tension within all aesthetic work, that between continuous progression (suspense) and the isolated image (suspension) that interrupts and ultimately ends the narrative flow. If cinema is thus bound continually to contemplate its paradoxical nature, as at once continuity and discontinuity, simultaneous presence and a layering of memory, then poetic cinema is that which addresses this dilemma in the most direct and elemental manner.

The elemental character of poetic cinema must not be confused with naivety. In his 1927 essay 'The Fundamentals of Cinema' Iurii Tynianov compares the rise of cinema art to the development of writing out of schematic totemic drawings. Just as the poorly drawn fur and head of a leopard '*helped* the drawing to turn into a sign', so also 'the "poverty" of cinema, its flatness and colourlessness, have become *positive* means, genuine resources of art'.[16] The flat screen allows for 'simultaneity of space', for instance in fade-outs to flashbacks, which contravene the materiality of bodies while suggesting the ceaseless commerce between bodies and imaginary experience. Black-and-white images free the cinema artist from the illusion of realism and allow for the manipulation of scale and perspective; Tynianov argued that colour film would make close-ups impossible. Only observance of cinema's distinct means of distanciation allows for the intimacy of representation. This goes even for time: '"cine-time" is not real duration, but conventional [duration], based on the correlation of shots or the correlation of visual elements within the shot.'[17] I want, in a certain sense, to re-examine Tarkovsky through the remarks of the early Russian theorists, taking the elements of cinema to be conventions like the crude notches in totemic inscriptions, which refrain from substituting themselves for the material reality (or meaning) to which they gesture. Tarkovsky's cinema is authentic not because of what it represents, but because of what it enables in the viewer as a project. As poet Robert Kelly has written about experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage (with whom Tarkovsky has a surprising elective affinity), Tarkovsky 'silences story so that we can happen'.[18]

It is no coincidence that the Russian words for natural element (*stikhiia*) and poetry (*stikhi*) are etymologically related; both derive from the ancient Greek *stoicheon*, or 'element', suggesting that poetry is nothing but the element of language in its spontaneous self-manifestation. By analogy, Tarkovsky's 'poetic' oeuvre is an investigation into the elements of cinema by means of which a merely visual world is displaced by an intensely palpable reality, the ceaseless flows of information crystallizing into concrete, somatic experience. In examining this idea I shall focus on such major features of Tarkovsky's cinema as the crossing of human gazes in the space of the screen; the sometimes violent sublimation of the image as it is transformed into temporal experience; the use of cinematic narrative to cultivate new types of attention in the viewer; and the study of atmospheres as conditions of experience. In sum, the elements of cinema are inseparable from the unifying sense of pregnant time, of potentiality within time, which cinema intensifies in human experience. In Tarkovsky it is the elements of cinema that enable the elements of nature to *be*.

Given the conservatism of many of Tarkovsky's public statements about art, especially later in life, it is no surprise that critics have reciprocated by applying rather restrained methods of analysis to his films. As a rule, more exciting and rewarding responses have been provided by artists, from Chris Marker and Aleksandr Sokurov in their cinematic homages, and Toru Takemitsu and François Couturier in their musical tributes, to the contemplations of *Stalker* in Kenzaburō Ōe's novel *A Quiet Life* and David Bate's *Zone* (2001), a series of photographs taken in Estonia, where *Stalker* was shot. For instance, Bate's *Gathering Crowd*



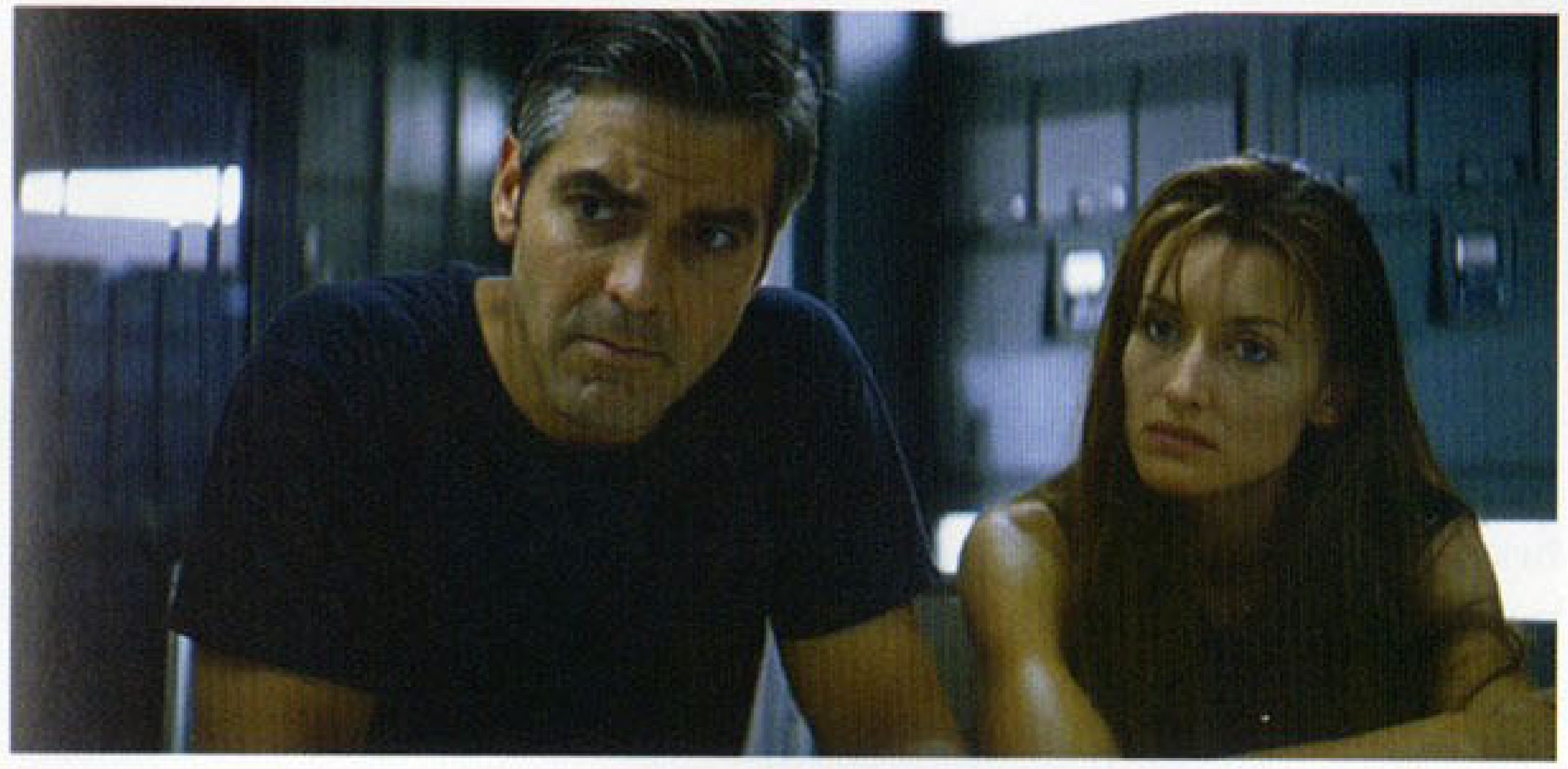
David Bate, *Gathering Crowd* from ZONE series (2001).

Solaris (1972), di
Andrei Tarkovsky

captures the way that the surface of Tarkovsky's screen uses subtle variations in texture and colour to puzzle our vision and elicit from us a more assertive posture of viewing.

Given the interest of so many artists in Tarkovsky's work, it is ironic that *Solaris*, a film about unsuccessful copies, has been the only Tarkovsky film to suffer a Hollywood remake, at the hands of Steven Soderbergh in 2002. Tarkovsky purists were understandably bemused; even Stanisław Lem, the author of the original novel and Tarkovsky's nemesis, allegedly acknowledged Tarkovsky's pre-eminence. Yet, while the value of Tarkovsky's films seems inseparable from their unrepeatable virtuosic performance, even *Solaris-2* responds creatively enough to be thought-provoking. In fact, the very idea of remaking *Solaris* reminds us that Tarkovsky's 'original' is also a kind of copy of Lem's novel, which in turn is concerned precisely with the status of clones vis-à-vis their human prototype. Like 'Hari-2' (as Kris dubs her), *Solaris-2* is a derivative product that borrows its intelligence from an 'original' and is subject to the imperfections of the distracted copyist; just as Hari-2's dress apes details of the original design without understanding their functionality, such as the laces with no ends, so do echoes of Tarkovsky's film surface randomly in Soderbergh's remake (but without formal acknowledgement in the credits). Like Kris with Hari, the sympathetic viewer tries to guard Soderbergh's film against the shame of being exposed as an empty flow of neutrinos. Suspended between the crossed gazes of the Ocean and of Kris, Hari-2 is positioned as a human subject and begins to respond accordingly; similarly, a film depends on the quality of the gazes that bring it into living time and 'stabilize' it as a composite image that, at the very least, facilitates 'contact' between the viewing subject and the absent original. That is to say, Soderbergh's remake unwittingly makes us experience the uncanny sense of recognition and loss that lies at the heart of Tarkovsky's inimitable film. Moreover, Soderbergh renders a valuable service by reminding us that, as a true artist of the cinema, Tarkovsky's films are closer to the studios of Hollywood than to those of the Dutch Old Masters, and that our understanding of both Tarkovsky and of film history can only be enriched by integrating them in the same analysis.[19]

Indeed, Tarkovsky's films provide valuable material for our understanding of art in its contemporary state, in which new media and new types of aesthetic encounters have proliferated. In Douglas Gordon's video installation *24-Hour Psycho* (1993), for example, Hitchcock's classic film is projected at a slow rate of two instead of the normal 24 frames per second. According to new-media theorist Mark Hansen, the suspension of Hitchcock's narrative 'strips the work of representational "content" [. . .] such that whatever it is that can be said to constitute the content of the work can be generated only in and through the viewer's corporeal, affective experience, as a quasi-autonomous creation'.[20] Hansen argues that, by withholding representation and rendering the spectator's body as the compositional centre, recent video art redefines the very nature of the image, which 'now demarcates the very process through which the body [. . .] gives form or *in-forms* information'.[21] While Hansen insists that this is a distinct quality of the new digital media, Tarkovsky's films demonstrate its applicability also to



Solaris (2002), dir.
Steven Soderbergh.

works in older media where the suspension of narrative flow makes the spectator (or reader) the centre of composition. To my mind, the key distinction between Tarkovsky and Gordon is not so much the medium itself (i.e., film vs digital video), but that Tarkovsky retains the pretence of narrative continuity within the bounds of an autonomous work, whereas Gordon presupposes the viewer's familiarity with Hitchcock's classic of suspense. However, the underlying relationship between suspense and suspension in the two artists (and, more broadly, in poetic cinema and contemporary video art) differs only in degree, not in kind.

Tarkovsky's treatment of the image is exemplified by the character of Foma, the unsuccessful apprentice icon-painter in *Andrei Rublëv.* As I have argued in my book on *Andrei Rublëv*, Foma is a poor icon-painter not only for his indolence and empty ambition, but even more for his tendency to imagine. 'You're endlessly making things up', Andrei scolds. If we attribute the scenes of flying and the Russian Calvary to his imagination, we see that Andrei's comment touches on the heart of his own dilemma as icon-painter – and of Tarkovsky's as the author of the film: how can one convert the world into an image without reducing it to one's own fantasies? Unlike Foma, Andrei is receptive; he observes and analyses before setting brush to surface. Though representation is not per se a pious or passive enterprise, it does involve detaching one's vision from one's own mental images, verifying the image with time. In this I see a distinct parallel between Tarkovsky's films and Mark Wallinger's remarkable installation *Via Dolorosa* (2002), a video projection of excerpts from Franco Zeffirelli's film *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977) with a large central portion of the screen blacked out. Unlike Malevich's *Black Square*, which it overtly references, *Via Dolorosa* retains the promise of representation even as it denies the viewer easy visual gratification, thereby dramatizing the role of narrative (whether inherent or external to the work) in filling in the empty spaces in the representation. This is just one more suggestive example of how Tarkovsky's films continue to function creatively within the world of modern art and can continue to make crucial contributions to contemporary aesthetic theory.

The foregoing provides a preview of some of my speculative claims, but first and foremost this book is intended to serve as an historical and interpretive guide to the seven major films and numerous other projects of Andrei Tarkovsky. The following chapters deal with each major work in roughly chronological order, beginning with his student works and culminating with his staging of Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov* and his final film *Sacrifice*. As far as possible I have tried to take each film on its own terms, happily ignoring, for instance, the old canard that Tarkovsky somehow disfavoured his third-born feature film *Solaris*. At various times he was viciously critical of *Ivan's Childhood* and *Andrei Rublëv*, but they are no lesser films for it. Unfortunately, by adopting a moralizing and often self-important tone, in his printed texts (especially the late compilation *Sculpting in Time*), Tarkovsky unwittingly contributed to the tendency of interpreting his films as woolly mystical fables. Tarkovsky's reflections on his craft sound suspiciously like a negation of the cinematic, a legacy that has been further ingrained by his closest disciple in Russia, Aleksandr Sokurov. Certainly Tarkovsky's essays and interviews over the years are invaluable supplements to his films. His insistence on time as the central category in his films seems to me both correct and productive. However, my inclination throughout has been not to read Tarkovsky's films through his statements, but to read his statements through his films.

The organization of the book also reflects my underlying argument, that the *meaning* and *significance* of Tarkovsky's films are accessible only through their direct apprehension as art works. I take as my guides the four traditional elements of matter, each of which is approached through distinct elements of cinema that conditioned Tarkovsky's work, from 'system' and 'imaginary' to 'screen', 'image', 'story', and 'shot'. Along the way I shall consider and clarify Tarkovsky's thought in the broader context of film theory, especially in the final chapter on 'atmosphere', a profoundly problematic concept but an almost inescapable term of reference in discussions of poetic cinema.

I begin with the first primal element, earth. In the final episode of *Andrei Rublëv*, Boriska discovers the right clay when he slides down a muddy slope in torrential rain. This clay forms the mould in which the bell is forged as a thing of beauty and a clarion of hope. Following the analogy, it might seem that earth is the element in Tarkovsky's film that is most susceptible to being a holder for symbolic meanings. After all, earth surrounds and supports the home, which one abandons only for shameful reasons (*Stalker*, *Nostalghia*, *Sacrifice*), to which one returns barefoot so as to sense each step of approximation (*Mirror*). Earth is the nation, Russia, and – at least in *Solaris* – the planet. These are all retrograde concepts, perhaps, but not only in the sense that they appeal to an earlier time. They also have come to obscure what they represent and must be renewed in a fresh experience of earth itself.

Earth is far more than a vessel for nostalgia. Earth dominates Tarkovsky's *There Will Be No Leave Today* (1958), in which a store of unexploded bombs is discovered beneath a town that has only recently been reconstructed after World War II. The very earth that has hosted and preserved the scarred town has become its secret enemy. Aware that detonation might flatten the town, effectively reprising the effects of the war, a group of young soldiers excavate the bombs with loving attention, cradling them like newborns as they carry them out of the pit and then transport them by truck to a desolate gully. Tarkovsky himself played the soldier who lights the fuse, scoring the earth with craters and filling the air with smoke and dust. Earth is a vulnerable ground constantly covered, battered and burnt by the other elements. The true matter of Tarkovsky's films, earth is a necessary counterpoint to the catastrophic events – floods, storms, conflagrations – that really interest him. Earth, for me, denotes the spatial conditions for Tarkovsky's depictions of human interiority. Earth is the system within which Tarkovsky worked, the locations where his films unfolded, and the screen on which they are projected.

Fire is more broadly the element of thought for Tarkovsky, who was at heart a committed iconoclast and bibliomachist. Tarkovsky's films present a continuum of images that render the world visible while, at the very same time, obscuring its material reality beneath the representation. By his own admission, Tarkovsky intended for his carefully crafted images to burn up in the viewer to activate ever-new meanings and senses (ST 89). The designs we see are merely the medium reacting to the invisible presence of a fire that is not – and cannot be – represented. At the end of *Andrei Rublëv* it is when the coals stop glowing that the icons appear. Thus fire comprises the words, stories and imaginary that do not so much signify a presence as outline a poignant possibility.

Water is the universal element of art, for it reflects and refracts light around the objects it covers, removing them from everyday use while intensifying our visual contact with them. Tarkovsky's fascination with the diaphanous element of water was in evidence as early as *Steamroller and Violin*, where he repeatedly studies the effect of people and things passing through puddles and tracking water onto dry pavement, as if painting in water on the earth. Over time, the ubiquity of water in Tarkovsky's films accrued baptismal connotations, as witness the fish that swim in the submerged world of *Stalker*. However, as in the other cases, water is first and foremost a medium of representation; indeed, it is the very basis of aesthetics, as a medium that transforms the world into image. These chapters thus examine central features in Tarkovsky's aesthetic presentation of material and ideological reality: the sensorium, time and the shot.

Which leaves the element of air, to which Tarkovsky dedicated his final film, *Sacrifice*. As wind, air is an uncontrollable flow like fire and water, destructive of human dwellings and human order. In *Stalker* it is the most palpable trace of the alien presence. Yet wind is also what is missed most in the spacecraft orbiting the planet Solaris; the cosmonauts attach paper strips to the vents to simulate the rustle of leaves in a breeze. Similar – in an as yet indefinable way – is the concept of cinematic atmosphere, as that which both makes the film human and opens it up to the endless and inhospitable flows of nature. Atmosphere is the element of Tarkovsky's creative world that bridges his artistic and theoretical registers of discourse. It is my ultimate task to define and account for this elusive element that animates the image without ever becoming visible.

A note on technical matters. I have taken the liberty of translating the titles of Tarkovsky's films and other works as they strike my ear in the Russian. This not only involves the choice of *Ivan's Childhood* over the nonsensical but deeply ingrained *My Name is Ivan*, and of *Time of Travel* instead of the incorrect *Travel in Time*, but also the elision of the definite article from the films *Steamroller and Violin*, *Mirror* and *Sacrifice*. When not drawing direct comparisons, I have used the title *Andrei Rublëv* for both extant versions of the film, despite my preference for the 1966 version that actually bears the title *The Passion According to Andrei*. While I have consulted as much of the documentary and secondary literature as possible, including unpublished archival holdings, I have tried throughout to avoid duplicating material that is otherwise available in English. I cite existing translations when available, although for the sake of accuracy and consistency I have provided my own translations of Tarkovsky's texts. In light of the vast number of different editions my references to Tarkovsky's diaries provide only the date of the relevant notation.

earth

Sasha in the doorway (*Steamroller and Violin*).

1 The System

When the door opens in the first shot of *Steamroller and Violin* one senses the curtain going up on Andrei Tarkovsky's career in cinema. Out of this door will proceed an entire line of characters, from the medieval icon-painter Andrei Rublëv to the post-apocalyptic visionaries Domenico and Alexander. It will open onto native landscapes and alien worlds, onto scenes of medieval desolation and post-historical apocalypse, and onto the innermost recesses of conscience. Yet, for the moment, the open door reveals only a chubby little schoolboy named Sasha with a violin case and music folder, who awkwardly and tentatively emerges into the familiar, if hostile courtyard of a Stalin-era block of flats.

Tarkovsky's seven major films have achieved such exclusive status in Soviet cinema that it is easy to ignore the degree to which he, like little Sasha, was at home in the very system that threatened and ultimately rejected him. There was, of course, no other way for him to pursue his vocation in the USSR, where everything from the total number of releases to each studio's supply of film-stock was stipulated in the yearly plan issued by the government, whose monopoly on film production was exercised through the State Committee for Cinema Affairs (Goskino). While Tarkovsky's relationship with the authorities was never easy, his travails taught him how to use the system for his own ends. In years when numerous major films were banned outright, to be released only with the onset of perestroika in the mid-1980s, all of Tarkovsky's films were approved for domestic and foreign release and were reviewed in the Soviet press. Moreover, while Tarkovsky was at times inconvenient for the system, he was its greatest international star throughout the 1960s and '70s, an invaluable advertisement for Soviet art and the source of scarce hard-currency earnings. In short, Tarkovsky and the system found it within their mutual interest to achieve an accommodation, however tense and uncomfortable. The full story of this fragile peace reaches epic proportions, especially in the years of *Andrei Rublëv* and *Mirror*, which were both completed and released to international acclaim despite entrenched opposition within the Soviet bureaucracy. However, its main lineaments can be recognized already with Tarkovsky's first steps in film, at a time when he was unknown beyond the narrowly professional community, and when his high self-estimation had not yet been matched by comparable achievements and was certainly not shared unconditionally, even by his closest teachers and colleagues.

Andrei Tarkovsky was born on 4 April 1932 near Iurevets on the River Volga to the east of Moscow, into a prominent family of intellectuals. His father, Arsenii Tarkovsky, was a respected but somewhat marginal poet who became a war hero in World War II. Arsenii Tarkovsky left his family soon after Andrei's birth, and the future director grew up in a household consisting of his mother Mariia Vishniakova and his sister Marina. He began his university studies at an institute for Asian languages, but soon left and, after a term spent on a geological expedition, enrolled in 1955 at VGIK, the main Soviet cinema institute, in Moscow.

Little in Tarkovsky's previous life had suggested film directing as a vocation, and he did not approach his course of study as a maverick with firm preconceptions. Tarkovsky's education at VGIK formed him as a distinctly Soviet filmmaker in the academic tradition established by Sergei Eisenstein. In a 1966 interview, noting the careful orchestration of shot structure in his first feature-length film, *Ivan's Childhood*, Tarkovsky characterized it as 'a typical VGIK film, thought up in the student dormitory'.[1] Claiming that he had become a director only after *Ivan's Childhood*, he declared that, above all, 'studying at VGIK solidly convinced me that you can't teach art'.[2] However, his student films vividly illustrate the many benefits that Tarkovsky derived from his studies. For one thing, VGIK acquainted him with the very latest in foreign film trends, such as Italian Neo-realism and the French New Wave. For another, one should not ignore the fertile creative environment fostered by Tarkovsky's classmates, from Andron Konchalovsky to Vasilii Shukshin and Otar Iosseliani, who would go on to constitute an entire generation of young Soviet filmmakers.

After assisting Marlen Khutsiev on the film *The Two Fëdors* in 1956, which starred Vasilii Shukshin, Tarkovsky and his future brother-in-law Aleksandr Gordon co-directed the short film *The Killers* in the same year, based on Ernest Hemingway's short story and also featuring Shukshin. *The Killers* is in many respects a crude celebration of American film noir and jazz-age culture, replete with blatant errors (from misspelt English inscriptions to clumsy cuts) and misjudgements (such as the 'Negro' cook in blackface). More accomplished is Tarkovsky's made-for-television movie *There Will Be No Leave Today* (1958), which made a deep impression on the denizens of VGIK and became a staple of commemorations of World War II.[3] It tells of a detachment of young soldiers sent to remove a buried cache of explosives left over from the German occupation. While remaining firmly in the Soviet mould of narratives of patriotic heroism, it owed a particular debt to Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Wages of Fear* (1953). Like his French counterparts, Tarkovsky proved inclined to utilize classic devices of suspense to probe metaphysical resonances within a plain, unadorned picture of reality. Nonetheless, Tarkovsky remained *within* the mechanisms of the Soviet system and the world of the Soviet imaginary, as is evident from his collaboration with Andron Konchalovsky and Oleg Osetinsky on a screenplay 'Antarctic: Distant Land', a heroic tale of exploration in the spirit of Mikhail Kalatozov's *The Unsent Letter*.[4]

By contrast with his early noir, Tarkovsky's first feature film *Steamroller and Violin* appears a quaint and harmless cinematic poem, provocative only in its unabashed innocence. It tells of the friendship between the young musician Sasha and a steamroller driver Sergei, who saves the little boy and his fragile violin from the bullies who hang around Sasha's building in a Moscow that still bears the scars of war. This reverie is curtailed by the intervention of Sasha's mother, and Sasha is left to dream of a symphonic harmony between people and brightly coloured steamrollers in the renewed cityscape. It is still patently amateurish in some regards; for instance, right at the beginning of the film one of the boys is playing keep-up with a ball, and when he clearly drops the ball he keeps kicking the air as if nothing had happened. If Tarkovsky had not made his other films, one would hardly be talking about *Steamroller and Violin* at all.

Yet *Steamroller and Violin* is important not only as Tarkovsky's debut and the beginning of his collaboration with co-screenwriter Andron Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, cameraman Vadim Iusov and composer Viacheslav Ovchinnikov. In the first place, since it was produced as a student project under close supervision, it is one of Tarkovsky's best-documented films. Moreover, it provides a kind of compendium of all the techniques he learned at VGIK, as well as a tentative departure from the established patterns of Soviet film. Surprisingly, it was Tarkovsky's subtle innovation in this seemingly harmless short film that inaugurated the adversarial tone that subsequently came to dominate his relationship with the Soviet cinema authorities. Unlikely as it seems, *Steamroller and Violin* was hounded from pillar to post by vigilant aesthetic watchdogs and was lucky to have been released at all.

Tarkovsky's project for *Steamroller and Violin* was accepted in 1960 as his final student work and was slated for production at the Fourth Artistic Unit 'Youth' (Iunost') of Mosfilm, which specialized in children's films. It was to be a short film in colour, which if approved would be sent to general release. Tarkovsky's supervisor was Mikhail Romm, an accomplished director and sympathetic teacher who at the time was testing the boundaries of post-Stalin liberalization with his film *Nine Days of a Single Year* (1961), which provided a rare glimpse into the forbidden world of nuclear physics. In the Soviet film system, preliminary approval and even production were often the easy parts of the process. Each completed film was shown at Mosfilm for the members of the Artistic Council, who then subjected the work to comprehensive critique and discussion. As at previous stages, everything was up for collective decision, from the screenplay to casting, and from the scenery to the camera angles and editing; many of the comments were subjective and amounted to petty sniping. Tarkovsky accepted collegial review as productive in principle, willingly sitting in on discussions of others' work. Invariably, though, Tarkovsky did not relish his colleagues' responses to his films.[5]

At a meeting of the artistic council of the Fourth Creative Unit on 6 January 1961 *Steamroller and Violin* was subjected to a withering critique. Screenplay editor S. Ia. Bakhmet'eva insisted that, given its subject matter, there was a dearth of music in the film: 'I am not at all persuaded by A. Tarkovsky's claim that he likes the fact that the viewer leaves the picture feeling that there is not enough music.'[6] The film was criticized for its slow pace and weak dialogue. For M. Kh. Kochnev there was insufficient humour and it failed to teach 'correct language usage'.[7] He concurred with N. L. Bystrova that it was not a film for children. While annoying, such niggling criticisms were never going to concern Tarkovsky too much. More worrying was the consensus view that *Steamroller and Violin* displayed profound ideological flaws. The rather sinister characters of the teacher and mother, both of whom seem to delight in thwarting Sasha's dreams, implied a distressingly disrespectful view of authority. The film's most rabid critic was one T. V. Matveeva, who condemned the film outright as 'intellectual-philosophical'. For Matveeva, even Sasha's tender age constituted an ideological mistake: 'He [Sasha] is not a pioneer, not even a little Octobrite. As of yet, the norms of the social collective exert no influence over him.'[8] The main bone of contention, however, was 'the theme of rich and poor': Sasha appeared as a spoilt little rich kid, socially distinct from the street children and the worker Sergei. When pressed, Tarkovsky's critics referred less to the narrative than to formal aspects such as shot angles and editing. Bakhmet'eva clarified:

> Often this shift in accent occurs due to lapses. The carved leg of the piano, shot in close-up, has made the room look like a rich salon. It is evident that some details and perspectives which have surprised even the director are responsible for re-interpreting this scene.[9]

It was as if the story would be basically acceptable if only it were told straight, without 'details and perspectives'. This aesthetic critique eerily foreshadowed Tarkovsky's more serious problems to come, while calling attention to the way that his directorial technique would shift the emphasis in his films from narrative representation to visual presentation.

The problem was summarized by Kochnev, who alleged that the film was 'objectivist' since it refrained from stating the 'authorial attitude to the depicted phenomenon'.[10] Iusov was attacked for the same alleged 'objectivism': 'How can an experienced cameraman [. . .] pass through the entire film as a figure of silence. [. . .] You should have taken up a definite position', Kochnev told Iusov.[11] It may seem strange to call Iusov's camerawork a 'figure of silence' when not one shot is free of conspicuous refocusing, signalling a switch of perspectives within the frame. The lack of a unifying authorial perspective also rendered the narrative insufficiently clear. M. D. Vol'pin complained about the dance of the steamrollers at the end of the film: 'Not a single viewer will understand that it is [Sasha's] dream.'[12] M. E. Gindin laid the blame on Mikhail Romm for encouraging excessive experimentation, which may be acceptable in film school, but is 'impossible in a work which is supposed to educate, entertain, and show instructive things'.[13] What seems to be at issue is neither 'objectivism' nor 'subjectivism', but the very multiplicity of perspectives, none of which is privileged as authorial and, therefore, authoritative.

The situation was exacerbated by Tarkovsky's prickly response to the criticisms. The deputy head of the Artistic Council, V. N. Zhuravlëv, summarized the meeting by predicting that Tarkovsky 'can become a good director of Soviet cinema if he takes into account all of his shortcomings'. Turning to Tarkovsky, he advised him to show more flexibility: 'Andrei, you will never be able to work well if you behave like this.'[14] Thanking his elder colleagues for their input, Tarkovsky noted that in the presence of a stenographer he was obliged to register his disagreement with the ideological critique, which he couched in typically strident language:

> I don't understand how the idea arose that we see here a rich little violinist and a poor worker. I don't understand this, and I probably never will be able to in my entire life. If it is based on the fact that everything is rooted in the contrast in the interrelations between the boy and the worker, then the point here is the contrast between art and labour, because these are different things and only at the stage of communism will man find it possible to be spiritually and physically organic. But this is a problem of the future and I will not allow this to be confused. This is what the picture is dedicated to.[15]

Tarkovsky crowned his spirited rejoinder by exclaiming that their entire critique was 'forced' (*vysosano iz pal'tsa*, literally 'sucked out of their fingers'). More to the point, he took issue with the qualification of the film as 'realistic', revealing in the process a surprisingly nuanced appreciation of this ambivalent term.

> Realism is a flexible concept. The realism of Mayakovsky, the realism of Paustovsky, the realism of Serafimovich, the realism of Olesha and others, these are all different. And when we speak of realism we must speak regarding our own work. In the present case we are dealing with a short film. A short must have its own genre. This picture must belong to a certain genre and we have tried to preserve this genre.
>
> Our task was to create a conventional reality. What is the convention? That we could not develop the characters of the heroes over four or five reels (*chasti*) in the manner of Gorky or Furmanov. We develop them in a purely conventional manner, schematically, which is what we are being condemned for.[16]

When asked whose manner he worked in, Tarkovsky answered: 'We work in no one's manner' ('My ni pod kogo ne rabotaem'). In these sparse, off-the-cuff comments Tarkovsky moves seamlessly from standard categories of Soviet artistic discourse (communism, realism) to startlingly original aesthetic conceptions. For him, apparently, there was no outright contradiction between the system's thematic and stylistic limitations and the ambitions of his cinematic project. The problem was instead that his treatment of the conventional themes and stories of the Soviet system avoided staking out an explicit position, and this lack of definition was adjudged to be a dangerous 'silence'.

The nature and effect of Tarkovsky's nascent aesthetic can be traced in the early scene of Sasha's visit to the violin teacher. Each of the five characters in the scene becomes the centre of attention at least for a moment, rendering their interaction polycentric and enigmatic. In the hallway, the camera is repeatedly drawn to the apple that Sasha gives the young girl; obviously tempted, she sets the apple away from herself. Later in the scene, a long shot of Sasha departing down the hallway is suddenly refocused on the apple core left by the girl on the chair, with the now out-of-focus Sasha disappearing in the distance. Leaving aside the obvious symbolism (women are without exception depicted unfavourably, as unwelcome intruders in the male world), one notes the way that the apple becomes the material locus of an interpersonal exchange that itself is inconclusive in its outcome and in its inner meaning for the participants. The intervening scene in the teacher's room reveals a similar structure. While Sasha is playing, the camera pans left from the violin to the music and then, gradually losing focus, to a light blur; when the teacher appeals to Sasha to pay attention, the blur is resolved into a glass of water. The teacher calls Sasha a 'dreamer', suggesting that the pan represents Sasha's detached perspective on the world. However, its eerie movement, akin to an out-of-body experience, prevents the shot from being taken as Sasha's literal point of view. Tarkovsky is less interested in representing the story than in exploring its rich potentiality for multiple presentations and interpretations.

Already at this point in Tarkovsky's work one can speak about his depiction of the world as an exploration of time. This is made explicit when, on his way to the violin lesson, Sasha stops to regard a shop window that is uncovered as huge white letters are drawn upwards in front of it. Evidently the letters are to form a political slogan for May Day, displayed, as was customary in the USSR, on top of the building. Sasha takes no notice of the slogan that is imposed on the world; instead, he looks beyond the slogan into the window, where he sees himself reflected in four different mirrors. Then, by shifting his position, he views the surrounding world through the same multiplication. In the screenplay Tarkovsky and Konchalovsky commented: 'The mirror surfaces slice up the sparkling space and heap onto each other the reflected objects, which are cast from one dimension into another, engendering a new, wonderful and fantastic world of colour.'[17] The quintupled shot of a reversed clock indicates that such visual reflections actually change the flow of time, an impression that is heightened by an abstract aural pattern. Tarkovsky's and Konchalovsky's screenplay includes intriguing musical instructions for this scene (which also suggests why the composer Viacheslav Ovchinnikov later laid claim to having invented concrete music):

> The music that Sasha composes appears from concrete sounds which he hears as he looks into the reflections in the mirror. These concrete sounds are developed by a musical instrument. The musical sounds explode and are extinguished, but still explode and merge into a melody, which marks time more than it develops. It is harmonic development with instrumental enrichment.[18]

Time splintered and reversed (*Steamroller and Violin*).

The face of Soviet authority: Sasha's violin teacher (*Steamroller and Violin*).

The mirror augments the harmonic resonance of the images, without propelling the narrative forward; by contrast, narrative development requires Sasha to avert his gaze and move away. As soon as he does, the soundtrack changes to a fluent passage of piano-playing. This scene is a remarkably precise statement of Tarkovsky's view of ideology and art. The camera suspends the forward thrust of material and ideological reality in moments of complex, multiplied vision, which mark time only to allow time to begin to flow with renewed density.

A similar moment occurs during Sasha's lesson. He plays the beginning of a passage three times, each time interrupted by the grim teacher, who is the closest Tarkovsky ever came to a caricature of Soviet authorities. Sasha's dreamy gaze is depicted as a leftwards pan across the music, suggesting that he has begun reading it in reverse. Saying 'you must keep count', the teacher tries to dispel Sasha's daydreaming by

Visual resonance (*Steamroller and Violin*).

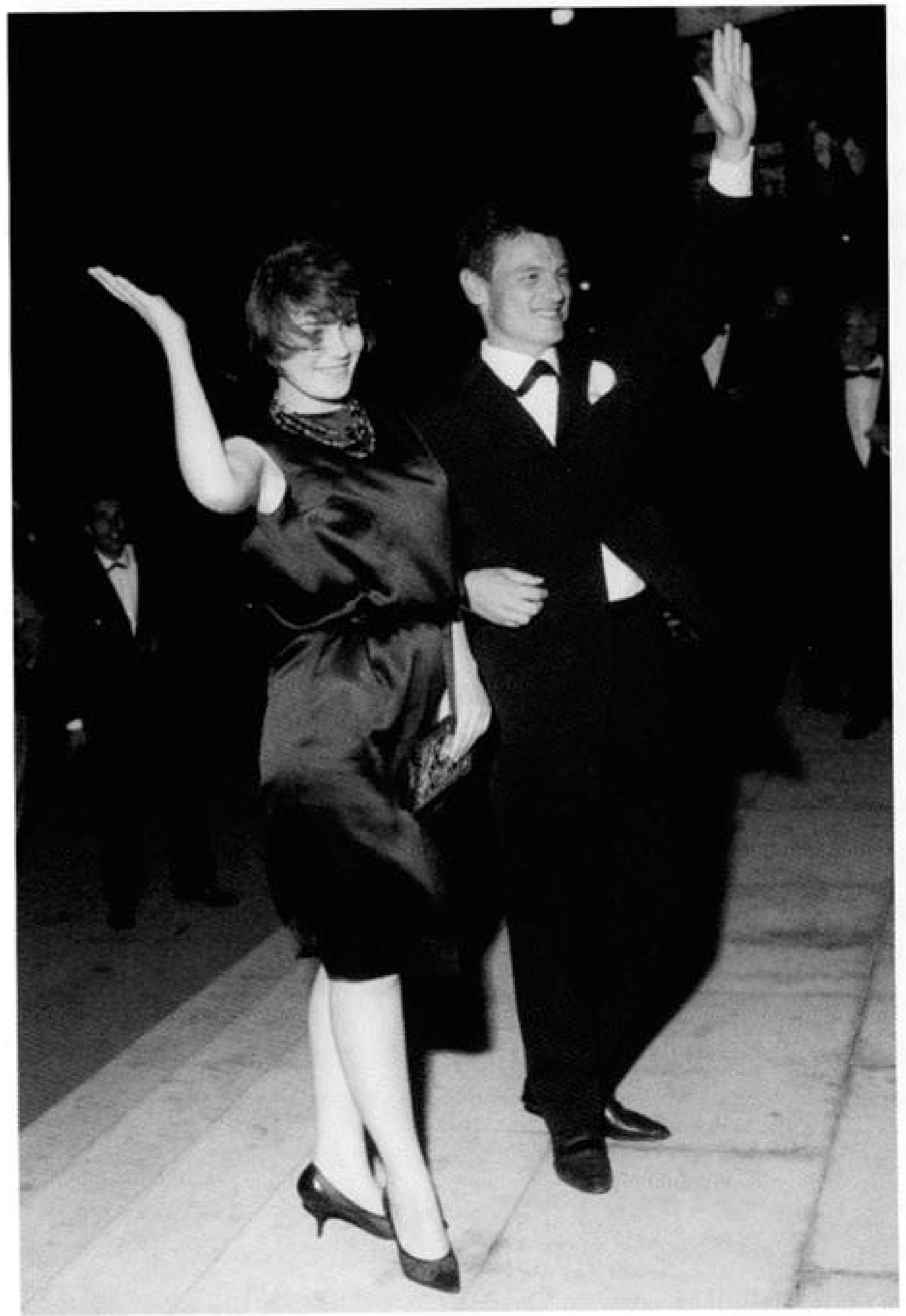
setting a metronome, but the onset of its ticking heralds the end of his playing. Within the diegesis of the film, art is a force that halts and even reverses time, providing revelatory 'crystals of time'.[19] This is why Tarkovsky claimed to have limited the amount of actual music despite its importance to the story: he wanted the viewer to leave the film with a desire for more music. The screenplay notes: 'The music is born in the boy's soul but cannot yet become a finished work. And unexpectedly it is cut by dissonance. The "shards" of the wrecked design fly apart.'[20] Instead of imposing a conclusive storyline or soundtrack on life, Tarkovsky identifies and celebrates dissonance and discontinuity as markers of expansively meaningful moments. Sasha never gets beyond a single phrase of his music, and he is thwarted in his desire get to see the classic Soviet film *Chapaev* with Sergei. These two works remain frozen potentialities, the full realization of which becomes the viewer's project in real time.

The shifts and reversals in perspective layer the viewer's experience of the narrative, just as a violin's resonators enrich its sound. Soon after Sasha explains the function of the violin's 'holes' to Sergei, reflections of the rain on the walls turn their final encounter into a magical, underwater dream, as if mediated by visual resonators. In a later scene, Sasha's conversation with his mother is shown mostly in mirror reflections, reducing her presence to that of a sinister apparition. However, turning an alarm clock towards the mirror, Sasha is able to freeze the moment as a play of depths and distances, of harmonies and rhythms. Similarly, Sasha's playing throws Sergei into a reverie of recollection about the war, which appears to be the source of his mental blockage and his mortal seriousness. His only response is work, which in the world of the film is equated to Sasha's music-making. However, the ending, which Tarkovsky's elder colleagues found so confusing, succeeds precisely because it is not clearly tagged. It resonates with all of the dimensions of experience that have been shown throughout the film in and out of focus, near and far, in mirrors and kaleidoscopes, in aural shards and fluent music, creating a dense world in which the characters share without controlling – or even understanding – its causality and significance.

Despite the flap over *Steamroller and Violin*, Tarkovsky was offered a full position as a director in Mosfilm's First Creative Unit, aptly named 'Time' ('Vremia'). His first assignment was a tough one, but in retrospect it was a marvellous stroke of luck. Vladimir Bogomolov's war story 'Ivan' (1958) had been adapted for the screen by the author in collaboration with screenwriter Mikhail Papava, and production had been initiated in 1961 by an untried director named Eduard Abalov. The rushes from Abalov's shoot proved unacceptable for the Unit's artistic council, which fired the hapless Abalov and his director of photography S. Galadzh in December 1960. Against the wishes of Bogomolov, who campaigned for 'one of the experienced directors who know the war situation well', the studio leadership assigned the project to the brash young Tarkovsky.[21]

In his 'explication' of his project Tarkovsky expressed his intention to sharpen the film's anti-war message. Noting that one version of the screenplay had Ivan surviving, Tarkovsky exclaimed: 'That's impossible; that doesn't correspond to the truth. One mustn't escape the war, but rather speak about it with all possible passion.' Stressing that the story involved trench warfare, Tarkovsky pointed to the lack of tension in the existing screenplay: 'In Bogomolov's story the narrator's remarks tell the whole story. But in the screenplay this is not translated from remarks into visual images. I believe in this picture. Let's say this is a film about war, about its horrors, and about people at war.'[22] Tarkovsky also remarked on the film's meaning for him personally: 'I am simply enamoured with this theme. I was also twelve years of age when the war began. This epoch is imbued with great pain. This is the fate of an entire generation. Many are no longer with us; they died like grown-ups.'[23] In line with his interpretation (and perhaps to avoid confusion with Aleksandr Dovzhenko's 1932 film *Ivan*), Tarkovsky recommended renaming the film *Ivan's Childhood*. He added to the screenplay several dreams experienced by Ivan, which (in the words of the official report) 'underscore the theme of the ruining of his childhood'.[24] He also complicated the male characters' relationships with the medic Masha and added the scene with the deranged old man amidst the ruins of his house. Despite all the additions, Tarkovsky noted that, since the previous director had wasted part of the budget, the production must be short and quick.

Throughout production Tarkovsky weathered an almost continuous barrage of criticism from the screenwriters, especially Bogomolov, who was especially upset with the way that the young actor Evgenii Zharikov played Lieutenant Galtsev as insecure and immature. At the meeting of the Artistic Council following the first showing on 30 January 1962, Tarkovsky blamed the screenwriters for Galtsev's shortcomings, refusing to omit the scenes and shots that some found drawn-out or objectionable.[25] The studio agreed with the screenwriters, however, finding the film



Tarkovsky with Valentina Maliavina at the Venice Film Festival, 1962.

too long, the character of Galtsev too 'infantile', the character of Ivan too 'hysterical', and the finale too 'naturalistic' (a word applied to scenes of graphic sex or violence).[26] A document of 12 February 1962 lists specific shots that should be cut or removed entirely in order to correct these shortcomings. A telegram dated 23 March 1962 demanded the deletion of Hitler's corpse from the documentary montage, as well as the cutting of the shot where the deranged old man shows Ivan a certificate embossed with the likeness of Stalin.[27] The final version of *Ivan's Childhood* still attracted criticism from higher authorities for the gruesome documentary footage, and to this day copies of the film differ in the composition of the final sequence.

In the end, all of Tarkovsky's travails were rewarded and relieved in a single stroke when *Ivan's Childhood* won (among other prizes) a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in September 1962 and the prize for best director at the San Francisco Film Festival in November of the same year (immediately following the conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis), the latter for 'the powerful style and the poetry of his images'.[28] The film attracted comment and ignited a polemic between the international notables Alberto Moravia and Jean-Paul Sartre. No less important was the enthusiasm of audiences in the USSR, where anything related to World War II was treated with the utmost solemnity. Tarkovsky was interviewed on nationwide radio, and from April 1962 until the middle of 1963 Mosfilm fielded numerous requests for special screenings of the film, which received the Ministry of Culture's 'high evaluation'. Translations of foreign press reports flowed in, confirming Tarkovsky's new star status. No less important for him as an artist was his new-found access to foreign films and literature; his influences changed from Neo-realists like Clouzot to more exotic filmmakers such as Robert Bresson, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, Luis Buñuel and Kenji Mizoguchi.

The tale of *Ivan's Childhood* would be a simple one of perseverance rewarded if it were not clouded over by omens of what was to come. On the grounds that it was made by the children's unit of Mosfilm *Ivan's Childhood* was mostly shown in early matinees without any advance notice. Tarkovsky's independent-minded behaviour in San Francisco prepared the ground for 'the future legends about Tarkovsky's difficult and prickly character',[29] although press reports noted only his 'very pointed, Hollywoodish shoes'.[30] The file on *Ivan's Childhood* also relates the curious case of the missing photograph. On the day of the premiere of *Ivan's Childhood*, 6 April 1962, a party was held at the Dom kino, a kind of official centre for cinema workers that included a notoriously well-stocked bar. At some point, someone ripped some photographs off a small photo exhibit devoted to the film and presented them to Tarkovsky, who was accosted by local *babushki* and accused of theft. The argument escalated, and Tarkovsky resorted to some choice phrases in defence of his insulted wife, Irma Rausch. A ludicrously extensive investigation by a commission of the Mosfilm Party Committee and the Party Bureau of the First Creative Unit absolved Tarkovsky of any wrongdoing, but it also noted that the incident had contributed to a situation wherein 'widespread rumour is already calling Tarkovsky a drunkard, an arrogant and morally dissolute man who beats waitresses and concierges and commits all manner of unsightly deeds'.[31] None of this was true, save perhaps the accusation of arrogance, but it illustrates the oppressive, poisonous and demeaning atmosphere of intrigue and innuendo within which Tarkovsky was obliged to work.

Throughout 1962 Tarkovsky had been working quietly with Andron Konchalovsky on a screenplay about the greatest Russian icon-painter Andrei Rublëv, whose hypothetical 600th birthday had been widely celebrated in 1960. In early 1963 Tarkovsky and his screenplay were able to transfer to the more independent-minded Sixth Creative Unit 'of Writers and Cinematographers', in order 'to work with people who are closer to us in spirit and in creative aspirations'.[32] His hopes were not misplaced, and the discussions of the screenplay at meetings of the artistic council between April 1963 and July 1964, under the leadership of writer Iurii Bondarev and the directors Aleksandr Alov and Vladimir Naumov, were exceptionally positive. Elder colleagues repeatedly remarked on the historic significance of the screenplay and on the film's exclusive potential. At one particularly enthusiastic meeting Bondarev compared the screenplay to *War and Peace* and Naumov remarked to the visiting historian V. T. Pashuto (credited as a consultant on the film): 'I should say that you are present at a unique Artistic Council meeting because these people can be furious and mean, and indeed they often are.'[33] Tarkovsky remained at this same unit of Mosfilm for his next three productions.

This was the height of Tarkovsky's official recognition, and therefore an opportune moment to undertake a controversial, programmatic film about the monk Andrei Rublëv. Tarkovsky initiated a multifaceted campaign to ensure its success, showing himself to be a consummate man of the system, anything but the semi-outcast that he became after the film's completion in 1966. In the first place, Tarkovsky utilized the official ideological language to present the film's conception. In the introduction to their screenplay about Rublëv, Tarkovsky and Konchalovsky wrote that their conception arose

> from our profoundly conscious love for the Motherland, for our nation [*narod*], and from our respect for its history, which laid the way for the October Revolution, from our respect for nation's lofty traditions which are its spiritual treasure, which has been deeply imbibed by the new socialist culture.[34]

Here and elsewhere, Tarkovsky and Konchalovsky did not fail to mention that Rublëv was first in a list of artists included in Lenin's 1918 decree urging the construction of monumental propaganda.[35] In his comments at the Artistic Council Tarkovsky explained the opposition between Theophanes the Greek and Andrei Rublëv by calling the latter a genius: 'For this very reason even the wall of a communist society can withstand Rublëv's *Trinity*, this icon [. . .] because it expresses the nation's moral ideal, its aspiration for fraternity, beauty, etc.'[36] Tarkovsky compared the creation of the bell in the film to a grand Soviet feat of engineering like the 'damming of the Yenisei'– not, in retrospect, the most auspicious analogy, but an effective one at the time in the way it contextualized the film within the Soviet imaginary.[37]

As *Andrei Rublëv* was beginning its tortuous path to fruition in 1963, Tarkovsky functioned as a full member of the cinema establishment. He took an active part in the meetings of the Sixth Creative Unit of Mosfilm, supporting Konchalovsky's *First Teacher* (although he took the liberty of suggesting an alternative ending), criticizing R. Gold's film *Hockey Players*, and remarking on the poor quality of sets at Mosfilm apropos of the film *An Inch of Earth*.[38] In the autumn of 1964 he returned to Venice for the sixteenth Festival of Children's Films, where as a member of the jury (alongside American animator John Hubly, amongst others) he reported that he had secured a 6:0 victory for socialist countries over their capitalist counterparts.[39] (First prize went to *There is Such a Guy* by Vasilii Shukshin, whom Tarkovsky consistently rated as one of his only serious counterparts in Soviet cinema.) In transcripts of these meetings Tarkovsky appears comfortable speaking the official language. Defending his friend Gennadii Shpalikov's screenplay 'Point of View', which had originally been entitled 'Happiness', Tarkovsky asked: 'who else, if not a young Soviet citizen, should be making a film about human happiness?'

> If you set yourself the task of seeking some aspects of happiness in life around you, I assure you that, despite some very vivid moments which are obvious for all people with an elementary Marxist education in the social sense, this concept will be quite limited and true; but if you put all these aspects together and organize such a spectacle, I think that the result will be a very unsuccessful film, because it won't have a clear perspective. It will be an illustration of Marx's indisputable conception of happiness

> from his personal point of view, and to make a film on this, so to speak, cement, would be a thankless task on the one hand, and destined for absolute failure on the other.[40]

As with *Steamroller and Violin*, Tarkovsky appeals to official names and concepts, but only to look beyond them; a film can deal with ideological clichés only as objects of individual regard, as occasions for the exercise of human subjectivity. *Andrei Rublëv* is the greatest example of this. Tarkovsky was drawn to Rublëv not for reasons of patriotism or adulation, but rather because Rublëv's icons provided a powerful means to enquire into ways of viewing the world, both in Rublëv's time and in our own.

Despite the unstinting support of his colleagues and his own efforts to interpret the screenplay, Tarkovsky soon ran into trouble with *Andrei Rublëv*. Intimations of the problem emerged as early as a meeting of the Artistic Council on 3 October 1963, where Tarkovsky expressed both his exasperation at the constant rewriting of the screenplay and his refusal to change it any further. Screenplay editor N. V. Beliaeva hinted at dark forces at work against the film:

> I will perhaps die soon, and I want to die with a clear conscience. For me, the story of this screenplay goes far beyond the realm of our creative and administrative circumstances. [. . .] The elastic of this tale has been stretching for two years without end. Moreover it is unclear. Perhaps the comrades here have met with people who voice active objections? For me this is some kind of elusive ghost with which it is difficult to fight.
>
> I am simply taking advantage of the presence of a stenographer and, as a communist, would like to declare that I consider the whole story with this screenplay as a crime against the nation.[41]

At the same meeting it was decided to present the screenplay to the central leadership of Mosfilm and the Committee for Cinematic Affairs (Goskino) for inclusion in the plan for 1964. P. M. Danil'iants expressed the common sentiment when he exclaimed: 'I shall be in seventh and even eighth heaven if we are able [. . .] to find numerous supporters for this screenplay up above (*na verkhu*)'.[42] In the end a single high-ranking supporter proved sufficient. An official of the Ideological Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party helped Tarkovsky to arrange for the screenplay to be published in the leading film journal *Iskusstvo kino* and to secure financing for the project.[43] Publication and budgeting effectively legalized the film, although they also bound Tarkovsky to shoot exactly what and how he had promised.

The seeds of the protracted conflict were there from the beginning. Already in the Artistic Council of the Sixth Creative Unit of Mosfilm, both Konchalovsky and Tarkovsky had underscored the fact that the film was not called *Andrei Rublëv*. Konchalovsky declared:

> this is not a screenplay about Rublëv. [. . .] We wanted to see the epoch with Rublëv's eyes, and in this form the viewer will know precisely who Rublëv is; he won't be able to remember how Rublëv acted in this or another case, but he will have a thorough knowledge of his psychology. We wanted the viewer to understand how [Rublëv] experiences things.[44]

Tarkovsky added: 'Of course this is not a picture about Rublëv [. . .] that is a major mistake.'[45] Never intending to *tell* a particular story or interpretation of Rublëv, Tarkovsky instead traced its outline in order to suggest an unimaginable and unrepresentable fullness of vision. At the Artistic Council he described the screenplay as a musical development 'from major to minor' and then 'from minor to major'.[46] The connection between the constituent 'novellas' is not in Andrei's progression towards a denouement, but in the 'emotional movement of Andrei's moral destiny'.[47] Within this progression, the shift to colour for the closing display of Rublëv's icons 'will create the unusual effect of a blow, the very step which, perhaps, somewhere conventionally divides life and art'.[48] Throughout this and other discussions, while underscoring the ideological relevance of Rublëv, Tarkovsky poses his own task as the visual and aural communication of an inner state of being, which resists being reduced to a tidy message.

As Tarkovsky planned, shot and edited the film, its visual discourse constantly became deeper and more intricate. There arose new difficulties, such as the authorities' reluctance to fund a double-length film and the difficulty of selling such films abroad.[49] Faced at every step with the need to shorten the film, Tarkovsky consciously chose to 'violate its intellectual integrity' for the sake of its 'plastic integrity'.[50] As the film gradually approximated an abstract composition, a 'figure of silence', Tarkovsky's colleagues warned against experimentation that might cloud the clarity of the ideas, as had allegedly happened with *Ivan's Childhood*.[51]

The story of what happened after the film's completion is complex, but it has been told before and need not be repeated in full here.[52] Tarkovsky edited his mass of material down to around 205 minutes and submitted the film on 26 August 1966 under the title *The Passion according to Andrei*, a version made in such a hurry that some actors' names were omitted from the credits. The film was returned to Tarkovsky with a list of changes to be made, mostly concerning the film's excessive length, scenes of brutality, nudity and vulgarity. By December 1966 Tarkovsky had made most of these changes to a film now called *Andrei Rublëv*, creating a second version (one that has never been seen but is still rumoured to exist), only for Goskino to present a new list of demands, some of which Tarkovsky refused to meet. Once again the ultimate source of the authorities' objections has never become clear, but they must have been quite serious for the cinema system basically to reject one of its greatest products and heaviest investments. While faulting Tarkovsky for his stubbornness, Rostislav Iurenev has expressed his sympathy for the young director's plight: 'there were no concrete resolutions on the film, and it stands to reason that Tarkovsky could not cut and paste it according to rumours concerning the opinions of some [officials'] wives'.[53] The stalemate persisted until 1969, when the new version of the film was approved under the title *Andrei Rublëv* with a run time of 187 minutes. It was sold to a European distributor and was entered out of competition at the Cannes Film Festival. The Soviet authorities allowed its domestic release only in 1971, after Tarkovsky faced down calls for further cuts.[54] By this time, Tarkovsky and the state cinema apparatus had resigned themselves to an uneasy accommodation, which persisted right up to 1983.

Once the interminable controversies over *Andrei Rublëv* had died down, Tarkovsky began work in earnest on *Solaris*. In a letter to Stanisław Lem of 27 June 1970 Tarkovsky declared: 'Pan Stanisław! You can't imagine how glad I am. At last I can work!'[55] Based on a science-fiction novel by a Soviet-bloc author, *Solaris* was a relatively safe project. In the proposal Tarkovsky underscored the necessity of preparing the populus for all contingencies in the exploration of space and depicting the conditions for 'the final battle of [human] reason for its future, for progress, and for the beauty of the human soul'.[56] Tarkovsky could proudly represent

the film as fundamentally Soviet: 'From the moral, ethical and ideological points of view this picture could not be made anywhere but here [i.e., in the USSR].'[57] Not least important was the guarantee of 'financial success'.[58] Still, Tarkovsky endured incessant demands that he clarify the ideological and national allegiances of its characters (Kelvin seemed too foreign, the unimaginative authorities too Soviet), stress the progressive nature of future society, show more clearly the success of the crew's attempts to deceive the Ocean by sending a encephalogram of Kelvin's waking thoughts (as in the novel), and remove 'phrases treating of matters of fate and religion'.[59] They also objected to Kelvin cavorting in bed with Hari and running amok on the spacecraft in his underwear. Tarkovsky addressed these in 22 cuts, re-dubbings and clarifications, like the introductory titles that affirmed 'the constant development of human cognition' and 'the utility of studying the cosmos', as well as describing the 'state of society'.[60] However, most of these subsequently disappeared from the film in its final version, which enjoyed success at festivals such as Cannes and has remained Tarkovsky's most popular film in the West. In fact, at home as well, *Solaris* proved the least controversial film of Tarkovsky's entire septateuch, engendering broad discussion in the official press, largely centred around the film's relation to the novel and its bearing on the Soviet space programme.[61]

The success of *Solaris* confirmed Tarkovsky as the major Soviet director and as a thorn in the side of the authorities. *Mirror* was treated more or less as a vanity project, allocated to the Sixth Creative Unit (which during production was renamed the Fourth in an internal reorganization of Mosfilm). At Mosfilm many concurred with director Georgii Chukhrai's view that 'we can allow ourselves one picture that, albeit incomprehensible, is talented'.[62] The reaction of Goskino was harsher; its head, Filipp Ermash, reportedly declared: 'We have artistic freedom [in the USSR], but not to that extent.' One shot in particular – of Margarita Terekhova levitating – was repeatedly singled out as excessive. As late as June 1974 the head of the studio, Nikolai Sizov, was imploring Tarkovsky:

> No one except the refined clientele of the Palace of Cinema will understand your profound thought. We can make one version for distribution abroad, but for Soviet viewers . . . I can't for the life of me understand why after killing the rooster she has to ascend to the heavens. After all there's a war going on.[63]

Each time Tarkovsky would promise to remove the shot, but it somehow remained in the film. In July 1974 Sizov repeated his objection: 'There is no need for such evangelical tendencies in a Soviet film.'[64] At the same time Filipp Ermash pleaded for 'clarity', 'logic' and a more triumphant presentation of history.[65] During September and October Tarkovsky made only cosmetic changes: he added the footage of Soviet aviation hero Valerii Chkalov's tickertape parade (1936); fixed the chronology of the wartime newsreels, adding a shot of the liberation of Prague and removing footage of Vietnam and the Middle East; shortened the shot of the levitating woman; and re-edited the protagonist's speech on his sickbed.[66] Despite Tarkovsky's only partial fulfilment of his obligations, *Mirror* was approved, its harmfulness having been curtailed by limited distribution, despite the studio's often voiced concern to maximize box office receipts from the film.

For *Stalker* Tarkovsky moved to a new 'experimental' unit of Mosfilm, the Second, which showed more patience with the director's peculiar poetics. True, production was marred by a mysterious flaw in the film-stock, which prompted Tarkovsky to fire his cameraman Georgii Rerberg and repeat the entire location shoot shot for shot. The only really critical document in the files on *Stalker* is an editor's report from late 1977, which demanded that Tarkovsky make the screenplay more fantastic by stressing the alien origin of the Zone, its 'violation of earthly laws', and also the fictitious nature of the 'bourgeois' country in which it is set.[67] Tarkovsky's quick and easy acquiescence to these demands – and their irrelevance to the subsequent discussion – leads one to suspect that they may have been part of a ploy to get Mosfilm to re-launch production of *Stalker* as a double-length film, which it did in early 1978. The only demands made of the preliminary edit were that Tarkovsky add an explanatory text at the beginning of the film, amend the Professor's line when he telephones his institute (instead of the 'head of the laboratory' he now requests 'the ninth laboratory') and change the Professor's weapon from an 'atomic mine' to a generic 'bomb'.[68]

After the struggle over *Mirror* and the exertions of *Stalker*, Tarkovsky felt sufficiently exhausted and exasperated to compare his plight to that of Hamlet (in Tarkovsky's idiosyncratic interpretation):

> The tragedy of Hamlet for me is not that he is fated to die physically, but that he falls morally and spiritually, that before he kills he is required to accept the laws of this world. [. . .] In a sense everyone experiences something similar when placed by reality before the problem of choice. Therefore, when you ask me whether I have made any compromises in my life, whether I have ever betrayed myself in my work, then my friends who do not consider my fate too deeply would tell you 'no'; but I consider, on the contrary, that my entire life has consisted of compromises . . . [OS 180].

Indeed, in 1980 Tarkovsky was awarded the distinction of 'People's Artist of the RSFSR'; he was a featured speaker at the conference of Soviet filmmakers that year, where he gave a speech beneath a giant bust of Lenin.

In the fallow periods between films, as he awaited approval for screenplays, budgets and shooting schedules, Tarkovsky was rarely idle. In 1965 he produced William Faulkner's 'Turnabout' for Soviet radio, and in 1976–7 he staged *Hamlet* in Moscow with many of his favourite actors. Many of these projects shared the fate of his films. Conceived during Khrushchev's Thaw, like *Andrei Rublëv*, *Turnabout* was completed only after Khrushchev lost power. Because of its perceived pacifism and unusual sound, until the 1990s *Turnabout* was broadcast only once (14 April 1965) on Central Asian radio, in place of the regular nocturnal concert of classical music. A 1976 feature on Margarita Terekhova mentions that she is currently playing Queen Gertrude, but conceals the name of the play's director and passes over in silence her recent role in Tarkovsky's *Mirror* – the role for which she is best known and most highly regarded.[69]

Tarkovsky periodically worked on other's films: as screenwriter and art director for Leon Kocharian's *One Chance in a Thousand* (Odessa Film Studio, 1968); as screenwriter for Z. Sabitov's *Beware, Snakes!* (Uzbekistan, 1979); and (allegedly) as uncredited assistant on several other films, such as Shaken Aimanov's *End of the Ataman* (Kazakhstan, 1970)

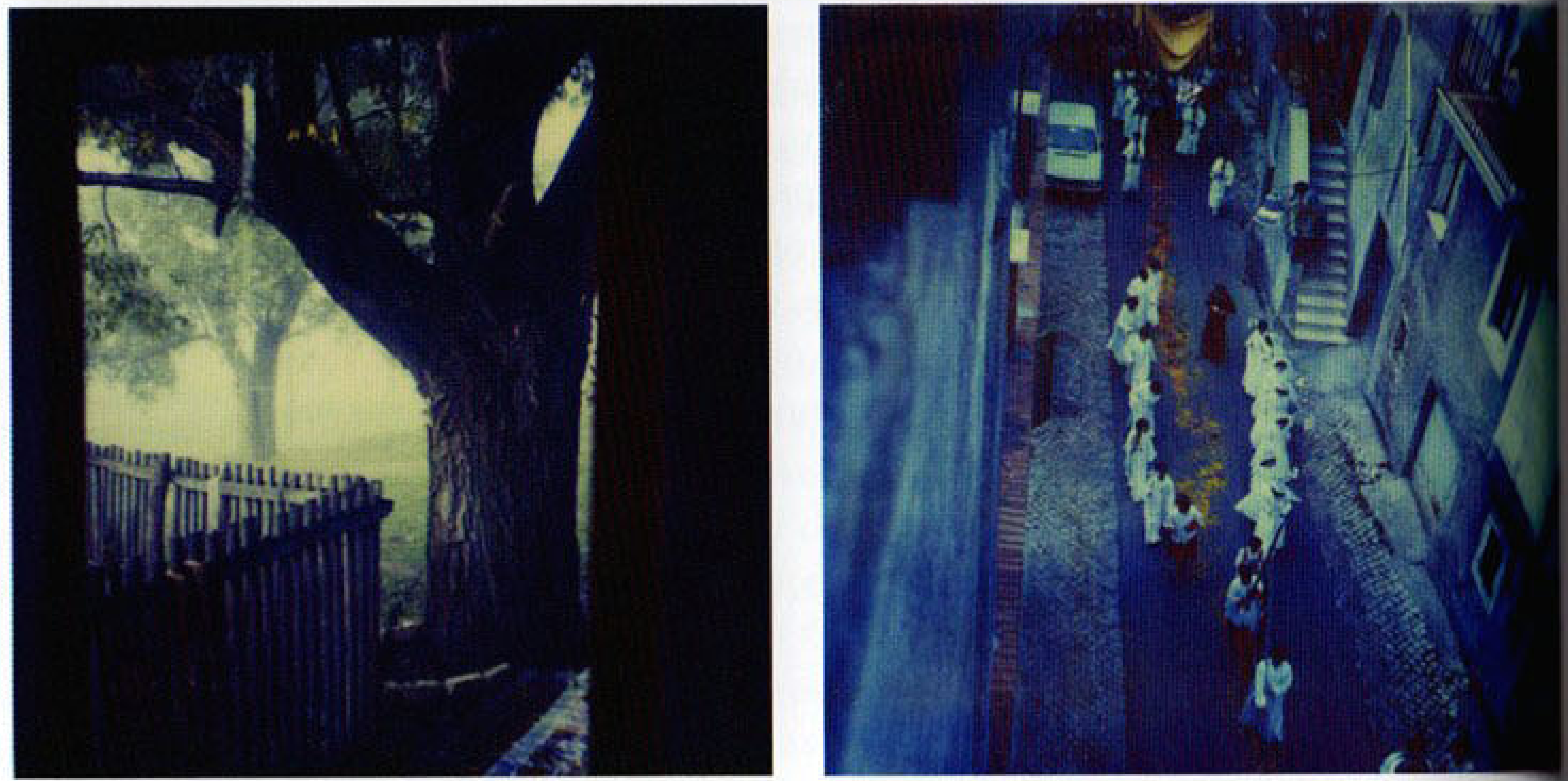
Tarkovsky in *Sergei Lazo* (1967).

and Tolomush Okeev's *Fierce One* (Kazakhstan, 1973). These works did little to enhance Tarkovsky's official standing, but at least they avoided the scandal of his two major acting roles. Suffice it to recall the sarcastic comment of Tarkovsky's character in Marlen Khutsiev's *The Gate of Il'ich* (aka *I Am Twenty*, 1961). The earnest young protagonist professes his reverence for 'the Revolution, the hymn of the International, [the repressions of] 1937, the war, the soldier, the fact that none of us have fathers, and the potato which saved us in a time of famine'. 'And the turnip?' asks Tarkovsky's character sarcastically. 'How do you regard the turnip?' In 1967 Tarkovsky flew to Kishinev to help Aleksandr Gordon with his film *Sergei Lazo*; he ended up adding a new character to the screenplay, a White officer who shoots the eponymous hero and other prominent Bolsheviks. When tarkovsky volunteered to play the role himself, the head of Goskino apparently viewed the character's actions as Tarkovsky's own wish-fulfilment. Tarkovsky's roles contributed to a virtual ban on both films.[70]

The constant tension surrounding his productions understandably wore on Tarkovsky. By 1982 he had been engaged in almost constant conflict with the system for twenty years. At 50, he perhaps sensed the need to ration his remaining strength. The aesthetic success of *Stalker* may have served to underscore the fact that further development in the same direction might finally cross the bounds of the permissible. Using a commission from the Italian TV network RAI, in March 1982 Tarkovsky travelled to Italy to shoot *Nostalghia* as a joint Italian-Soviet production. His failure to return to the USSR rendered *Nostalghia* ineligible for distribution in the Soviet Union. As a 'non-returner', Tarkovsky put on a production of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* at Covent Garden in 1983–4 and shot *Sacrifice* in Sweden in 1985, editing the film as he lay dying of lung cancer in a Paris hospital. Tarkovsky often cited his record of seven feature films in 24 years as proof of the resistance he had faced, but it has been pointed out that he was notably more productive than comparable filmmakers in the West such as Carl Theodore Dreyer and Robert Bresson. Nonetheless, Tarkovsky took to his grave numerous cherished projects, notably film adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*.

In a letter to his father dated 16 September 1983, Tarkovsky regretted that he was being portrayed as a 'traitor' to Russia just because he was requesting permission to remain abroad.[71] (This permission was denied, and on 10 July 1984 Tarkovsky officially declared his break with the Soviet authorities.) Of dozens of 'demeaning' incidents, Tarkovsky mentioned the lack of any public recognition of his 50th birthday and the alleged machinations of the Soviet delegation to the Cannes Film Festival in 1983 to prevent any award for *Nostalghia*, which he called a 'patriotic' film. (Tarkovsky still won a special prize, which he shared with his mentor Robert Bresson.) Nevertheless, he assured his father that 'Just as I have remained a Soviet artist, so do I remain.' The injustice of the entire situation was brought home to many when Tarkovsky died – on 29 December 1986 – on the cusp of perestroika; not long thereafter his films were restored to the highest distribution category and re-released to general acclaim, and in 1990 he was posthumously awarded the Lenin Prize.

The difficulty of understanding or even imagining the intricacy of Tarkovsky's relationship to the Soviet system undermines our desire to deliver a clear judgement on his personal behaviour vis-à-vis the state. The fact that he began his regular diary only in 1969 makes it impossible also to ascertain his own feelings on the relationship during its formative years. However, here, as in every other regard, the films speak for themselves with the greatest eloquence. The fundamental basis of Tarkovsky's difficulties was that, while the system required explicit 'themes' and detailed 'screenplays', Tarkovsky always regarded these broad categories less as goals than as points of departure for creating films of atmosphere and texture, in which conventional narrative schemes become tracings of an unprecedented potentiality. With the possible exception of *Sacrifice*, each of his films is profoundly 'Soviet' in its point of departure – in its theme, story and characters. However, the Soviet background of his films is only the framework for the more universal project of exploring new modes of attending to the world.



Andrei and Boriska at the post (*Andrei Rublëv*).
Two photographs by Tarkovsky.

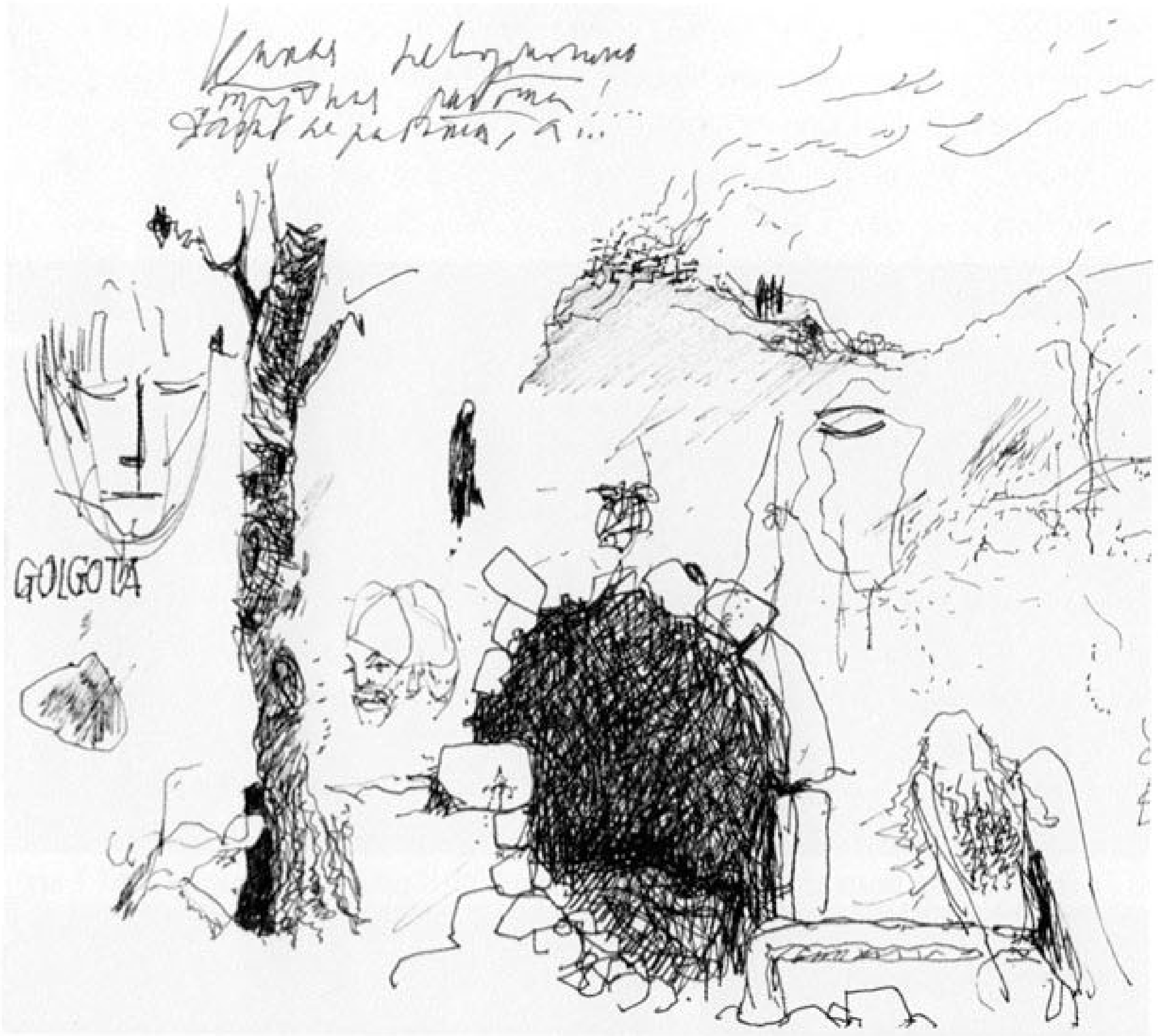
2 Space

Shortly before his death Tarkovsky recorded a dream in his diary:

> I dreamt of a quiet monastic cloister with its enormous ancient oak tree. Suddenly I become aware of a flame rising up at a point among the roots, and I realize that it is the flame of many candles burning in the secret underground recesses of the monastery. Two frightened young nuns arrive. Then the flame leaps high, and I see that by now it is too late to put out the fire – almost all the roots have become burning embers. I am deeply saddened by this, and I try to imagine what the cloister will be like without the oak tree: it will be useless, meaningless, miserable [29–30 September 1986].

This dream captures the temporality of Tarkovsky's films: in a grammatical pattern frequently encountered in his screenplays, the narrative past shifts into an introspective present that gradually focuses on the anticipation of future loss. It also captures the essential geometry of Tarkovsky's imagination, as in his films, so in his stage productions, drawings and Polaroid snapshots: a horizontal plane intersected and supported by a vertical one. It could be a mere post or a scraggly tree, as long as it suggests the spatial metaphysics of the cross over a grave, or of a church tower over a plain. It is both pillar and pillory. It suggests that if space is a prison, altitude is liberation. It suggests – as for the child Ivan, the monk Andrei Rublëv and his young friend Boriska, the Stalker, Gorchakov and Alexander – that the mastery of space is a crucifixion.

But this would be a dangerous over-simplification of a kind typical for those who judge Tarkovsky by the pious and prophetic tone he adopted in his later years. The dream is actually one of a tragic failure



A drawing by Tarkovsky.

of spirituality, which enters into conflict with its natural conditions; the intensity of the prayer undermines the shelter that makes it possible. This pessimism is more in line with Tarkovsky's films. In *Ivan's Childhood* crosses either stand crooked on ruined graves or are formed of the detritus of war, like the tail of the crashed German aeroplane. After the sack of Vladimir in *Andrei Rublëv*, Andrei says 'there's nothing more frightening than when it snows in a church'. Tarkovsky's camera may soar over the characters, but (unlike his polaroid photography) it never achieves Olympian tranquillity in its observation. In the spaces of his films there is neither captivity nor liberation, neither Promethean heroism nor Christ-like sacrifice, but human figures being tugged across space, up and down and through it, and also outside of it. The film is not a liberation from space, but rather its formation into a locus of vision.

Three kinds of space dominate all Tarkovsky's films: nature, the home and the shrine or cathedral. Humans construct fragile homes to shelter from hostile forces and alien gazes. When these homes are inevitably reclaimed by nature – whether flooded by rain, engulfed in flame or simply worn down by time – their ruins continue to stand as loci of memory and places of epiphany. Each of the three spaces – nature, home and cathedral – is distinguished by a characteristic visual tension, formed by a crossing of the camera's gaze with the characters' and spectators' lines of sight. Nature is simply a flow that absorbs the human gaze, though sometimes it eerily seems to be returning it. The home has windows, through which denizens peer out into the world, while strangers look in. The cathedral is marked by upright columns whose seemingly regular arrangement is disrupted by inexplicable folds in space, which create a specific density of time. Tarkovsky's cathedral space is demonstrated most fully at the beginning of *Nostalghia*, where a fertility ritual is performed in the rigorously geometrical yet disconcertingly elusive space of a columned crypt. James Macgillivray has shown that, while the camera appears to represent the perspectives of the characters, most notably Eugenia, Tarkovsky sutures different points of view to create a sense of confusion and powerlessness, rendering the grid of columns as a Dantean 'dark wood'.[1] The peculiar meshing of gazes in each kind of space corresponds to a specific kind of time, which knits the spatial folds into a unique fabric of experience.

Constructed by human gazes, space is always personal, never merely decorative or informative. In *Andrei Rublëv*, for example, Tarkovsky used some of the most famous monuments of old Russian architecture, such as the Church of the Protection of the Mother of God on the Nerl

The crypt in *Nostalghia*.

River, known very widely from its reproductions on postcards and calendars. Both Tarkovsky and Iusov insisted that their use of original historical sites as locations for *Andrei Rublëv* was motivated by the need for 'authenticity'. However, since these locations are shot exclusively from the outside, and their outer appearance bears all the traces of their long history, 'authenticity' here cannot mean that they are supposed to resemble their putative state at the time of the action; it is rather the way they disrupt the expected spatial and temporal flows with unexpected folds and seams.

Thus it is not surprising that in Tarkovsky's entire cinematic oeuvre there is only one true establishing shot, marking the sudden shift in location to Rome from Tuscany towards the end of *Nostalghia*. As he discusses in *Time of Travel*, in *Nostalghia* Tarkovsky also sought to avoid seeing Italy as a tourist, whose gaze is attracted to pretty spots on the landscape; rather he wanted each character (and viewer) to conjure up his or her own Italy – in anonymous ruins, modern hotels and bare apartments. It was uncharacteristic of Tarkovsky to place his films in any objectifiable or recognizable landscape; his spaces emerge in the visual plane of concrete characters, not as the receptacle holding the action but as its consequence.

Space is an excerption, the framing and folding of a field of vision out of the chaotic flows of natural objects and human gazes. The folds remain conspicuous: characters move unpredictably through the frame, which itself is constantly in motion and subject to refocusing. Buildings always bear traces of their construction and – more conspicuously – their gradual disintegration. The natural flows continue to dominate the no man's land that separates dwellings from each other. Between his home and his violin lesson the young Sasha (in *Steamroller and Violin*) is at the mercy of hallways and streets. Wide-open spaces prove no less ominous than the staircase of his building. When the wrecking ball opens a vista onto one of the Stalinist confections that circle Moscow the sheer verticality is eerie and oppressive. Only one architectural form is free both of claustrophobia and vertigo: the arch, perhaps the most prominent feature of Tarkovsky's Moscow (not only in *Steamroller and Violin*, but also in *Andrei Rublëv* and *Boris Godunov*). The arch describes space as both enclosure and epiphany, two opposing forces whose tension composes experience.

In his lectures to student directors Tarkovsky suggested they treat locations as medieval Russian architects chose the sites of churches; 'architecture', he said, 'should be the continuation of nature, and in the cinema also the expression of the characters' states and the author's ideas' (UR 51). Architecture is not merely a mental space, however; it is also formed of the specific gazes that conjure it up. Tarkovsky stipulated that the set designer take into consideration 'what optics and what film stock the cameraman will shoot on and what camera he will use'. In short, sites of human dwelling must not only organize space within the frame, but also enable vision on-screen.

Surprisingly, Tarkovsky did not unconditionally favour filming on location. In the studio, he said, 'you can do remarkable things, as long as you know how to do it and are correspondingly confident of the plausibility of your ideas in the conditions of the studio where you are shooting' (UR 55). Thus, while the landscapes in Fellini's *Casanova* 'could not have been shot better in natural locations', Tarkovsky admitted: 'I would never dare to shoot such scenes at Mosfilm'. He did, though, construct elaborate sets at Mosfilm for *Solaris* (by designer Mikhail Romadin) and *Mirror* (by Nikolai Dvigubsky).

Still, Tarkovsky was a plein-air filmmaker, perhaps for the same reason that John Constable adduced in 1819 apropros of his large canvas *Stratford Mill*: 'It will be difficult to name a class of Landscape, in which the sky is not the "*key note*", the standard of "*Scale*", and the chief "*Organ of sentiment*". The sky is the source of light in nature and governs everything.'[2] With characteristic panache Chris Marker has shown how frequently Tarkovsky uses a raised camera to frame his characters against the earth; this is not merely to root them in the soil, but also to view them from the sky. In Tarkovsky the sky keeps the earthly forms and dwellings submerged in the conditions of their appearance and, at the same time, on the verge of their disappearance back into the natural flows of wind, rain and fire.

It was in *Ivan's Childhood* that Tarkovsky firmly established his poetics of space. The film opens with a shot that rises up a pine tree as Ivan disappears from view and then reappears (improbably far away) at the back of the frame, looking towards the camera. One of the last shots in the film closes this movement by descending back down a tree, now a dead stump by the sea, as Ivan walks towards the camera. That these shots are marked as dreamlike or even fantastic underscores their symbolic value; Ivan's journey is both an ascent and a descent, leading to no particular goal but describing a defined locus of experience. It is never specified whether the four inserted episodes are dream or memory;

after all, the final one occurs after we learn of Ivan's death, when there is no one left to dream or remember. We therefore do not know whether these sequences belong to Ivan's mind's eye or to that of the spectator. More likely they are formed precisely in the crossing of these perspectives, as a purely imaginary space.

The first and last shots of Tarkovsky's final film *Sacrifice* echo those of *Ivan's Childhood*. At the end of the opening credits the camera rises up the tree on Leonardo's painting of the *Adoration of the Magi*, after which there is an extremely long take of Alexander and his son planting their own bizarre tree, essentially an improvised concoction of sticks. The final shot of the film, after Alexander burns down the house, is of the child lying under said tree, with the camera again ascending up its matted, scraggly torso. Resisting the cathartic decrescendo of *Ivan's Childhood*, the screen fades to an intertitle bearing a dedication to Tarkovsky's son Andrei, 'with hope and consolation' – only to fade back into the shot of the tree. There are many other echoes in the two endings: the beach, the bucket of water, the address of an absent parent. Yet the very motion of the camera reverses *Ivan's Childhood*, and the lament for loss is re-dedicated to a hopeful future. The parallel between the two endings raises the question whether, by bearing their author's imprint too overtly, Tarkovsky's last works restrict the ability of spectators actively to participate in the creation of the filmic space. Filmmaker Aleksei German has even linked the banality of the ending to the aesthetic of Socialist Realism.[3] Indeed, has the living tree become the rod of Aaron and the artist – a high priest?

The issue, as I see it, is basically whether Tarkovsky constructed his spaces as vehicles for his intended meaning or as sites where something unplanned and perhaps unintended can arise spontaneously for the spectator. In a 1962 article he discussed at length the relationship between intention and chance in the shooting of a key scene in *Ivan's Childhood*:

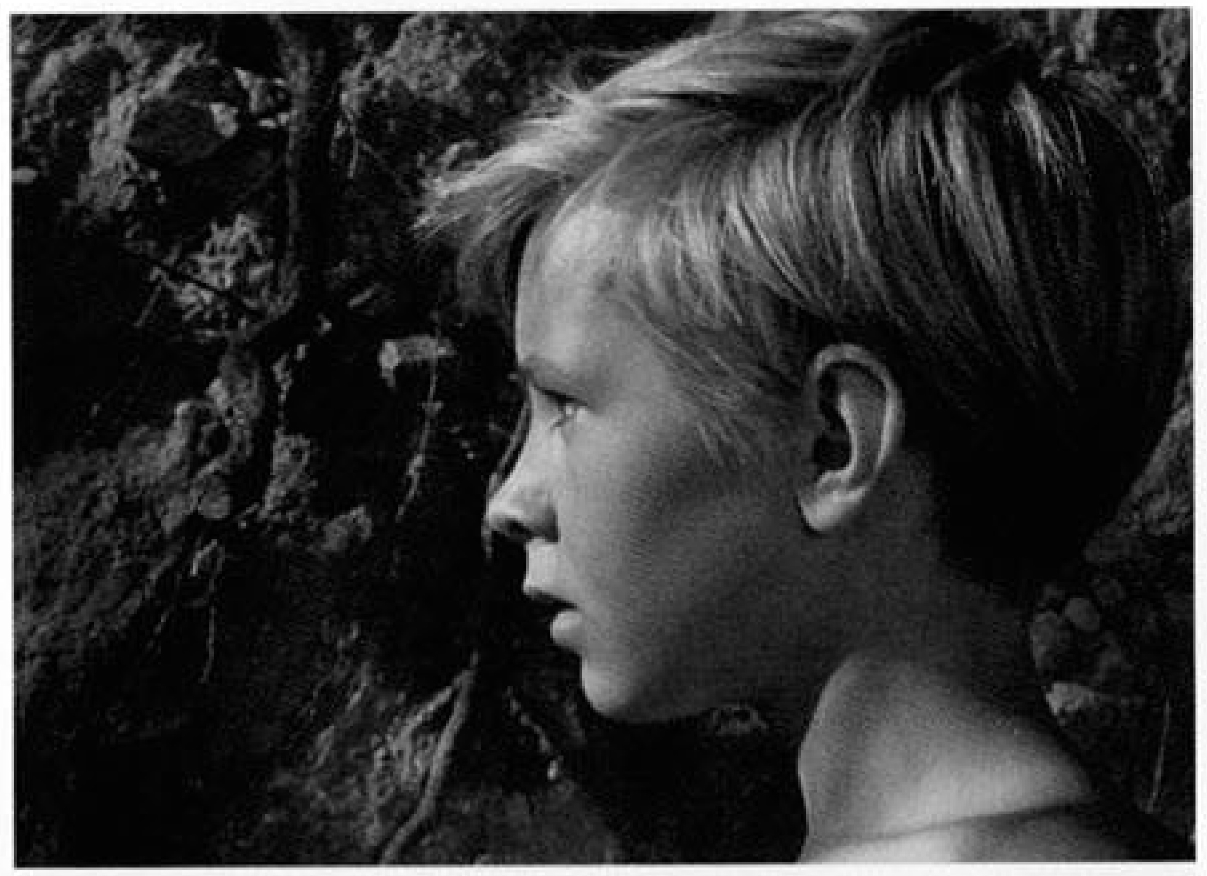
> We had the following project for conveying the spies to the opposite bank: thick fog, dark figures and flashes of the flares. The figures were to cast shadows like incorporeal sculptures. However the light breeze of the Kanev basin (where the 'flooded forest' was being shot) would probably have broken up our smoke patterns. Then we thought of giving some shots of the operation during the flashes of the flares and separating them by other shots, in this approximate manner: flash – two figures in the frame and the shoulder of a third, moving to the right; flash – three small figures in the distance moving away from us; flash – the frame shows eyes and wet branches . . . etc. When we rejected this idea we shot the material which ended up in the film and it seemed most simple and natural.[4]

Tarkovsky drew from this experience the lesson that the *mise-en-scène* should not be tailored to the intended meaning of the shot, but almost to resist it, in the manner of a counter-flow. He cited the example of Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante*, which begins with a wedding procession that follows the bride and groom around three haystacks: 'What is this? A ritual, a fertility dance? No, the episode is significant not in its literary retelling, its symbolism or visual metaphoricity, but in its concrete saturated existence. We see here a form filled with feeling.'[5] In this manner Tarkovsky saw spatial figures less as enclosed sets than as bare stages that invite and even require the spectator to fill in the gaps. What props there are, like Vigo's haystacks, must work as insensate material objects that resist our desire to allegorize or to turn the narrative into ritual.

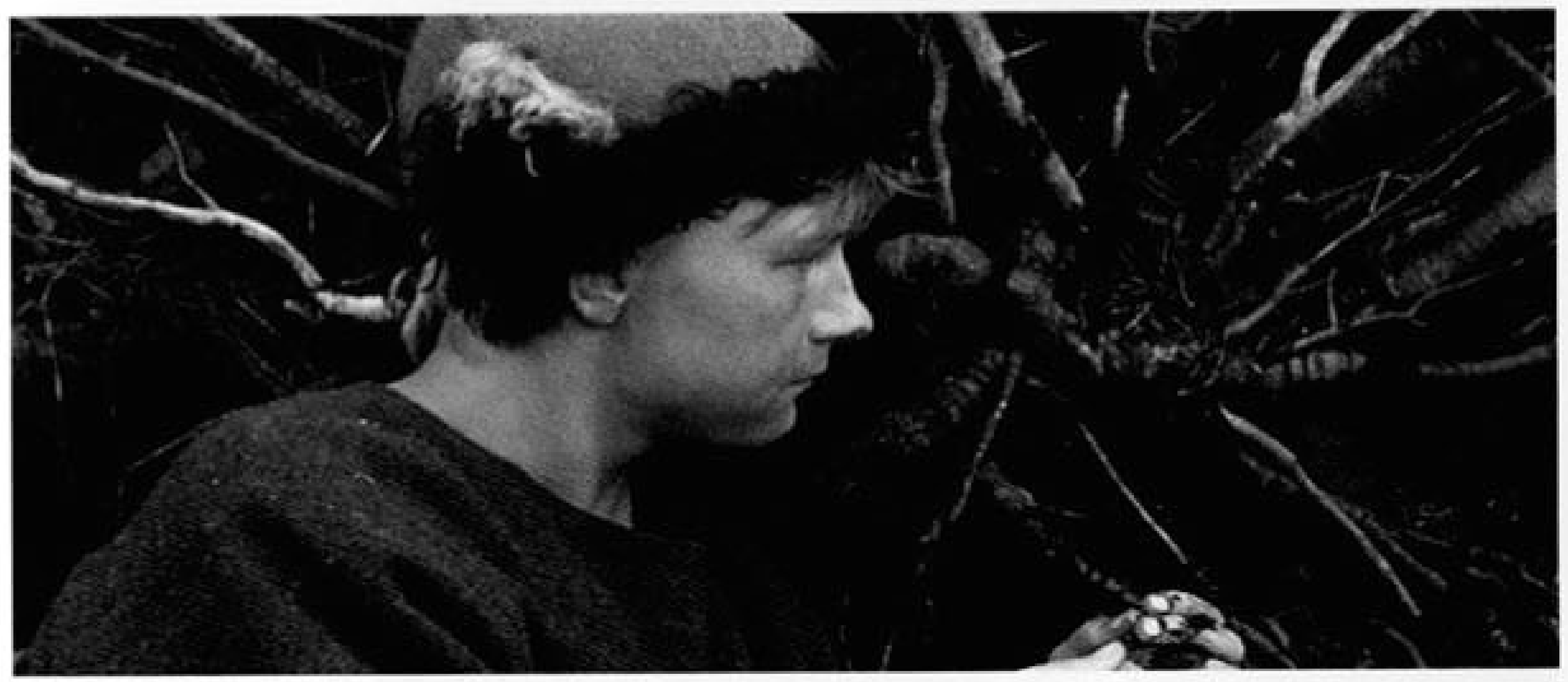
The cinema returns us to material reality not by representing it to us, but by forming a space where things and human gazes encounter each other as forces of resistance. Throughout the opening and closing shots of *Ivan's Childhood* and *Sacrifice* the single most important force in Tarkovsky's construction of space is the motion of the camera. Tarkovsky's manner owed much to the mastery of Vadim Iusov, a trusted collaborator who bore much of the responsibility for scouting locations and for establishing the look of Tarkovsky's films. Tarkovsky had originally wanted to team up with Sergei Urusevsky, best known for his work with Mikhail Kalatozov on *The Cranes Are Flying* and *I Am Cuba*, where the camera executes sweeping movements and stages dramas of light and shadow in each frame. In Iusov, Tarkovsky found Urusevsky's dramatic style balanced by a welcome patience, even implacability. Moreover, Iusov consistently provided a finely minted image of such crisp clarity and high resolution that it has often been credited with ensuring the 'authenticity' of Tarkovsky's visual textures. Iusov's camera captured both the flows of space and the forces – both material and psychic – which stabilize it, at least for a moment, as a definite image in a definable location.

But Tarkovsky's use of space was not only the stabilization of its flows under the forthright eye of the camera; he was also intensely sensitive to the ways in which specific spaces – no less than individual people – elicit distinct responses from us, directing our gaze towards specific possibilities in the world. Spatial framing is a precondition for the event, the irruption of the new from without; it is therefore both a stabilization of time-flows and the condition for their destructive and revelatory manifestation. In *Ivan's Childhood* the radiant idyll of Ivan's dreams is shown as no less distinct and 'authentic' than the dark intimacy of the bunker or the terror of open combat. What distinguishes the three kinds of space, more than anything else, is the logic of the camera's gaze. While scenes in the bunkers are shot with a relatively stationary camera, on the battlefield the camera soars and wanders independent of the characters. The scenes of dream or memory, by contrast, purposefully confuse the camera perspective: now we see with Ivan's eyes, now we look straight at him or see what he cannot. The three kinds of space coincide only in Ivan's fantasy of revenge, inspired by his viewing of Albrecht Dürer prints, when the battlefield invades the bunker and the dream is deployed in battle. *Ivan's Childhood* is thus a drama of space, not only in the way that Ivan comes from and returns to 'the other side', but also – and more fundamentally – in the way that action is equated to the formation of visible locations amidst the elemental flows.

Nature in *Ivan's Childhood* appears in three main guises: the idyllic landscapes of the dream sequences, filled with vegetative and animal life (shot in the Crimea and at Mosfilm); the swampy wood of the front (shot near Kanev); and the birch grove near Masha's infirmary (shot outside Moscow in Nikolina gora). The prologue links the first two natural landscapes. Ivan is first shown in a sun-drenched forest. Both Ivan and the camera are in motion, which creates a disorientating and dizzying perspective; this is crowned when we imagine the camera to be following Ivan's perspective as he runs down a hill, only for it to swoop up violently and inhumanly. Ivan is then shown framed against the earth, which itself is knotted with tree roots (a shot that is repeated practically verbatim in *Andrei Rublëv*, in the episode 'Theophanes the Greek'); the camera suddenly turns upwards to frame the anxious mother in close-up. Ivan then wakes up in a distinctly different space; if previously the four elements appeared in vivifying harmony, here they are jumbled: the smoke fills the air and water covers the land. As in the first shot of the film there are folds in this space: when Ivan emerges from his hideout he slips off-camera left and re-emerges on camera several seconds later in an impossibly distant



Ivan on the earth (*Ivan's Childhood*).



Foma on the earth (*Andrei Rublëv*).

location. We then see low shots of Ivan framed against an ominous sky; like the Stalinist high-rise in *Steamroller and Violin*, the windmill is too vertiginous to be a dwelling. Subsequently, having lost his home in nature, Ivan will not be framed against the earth, but concealed by it, almost swallowed up by it.

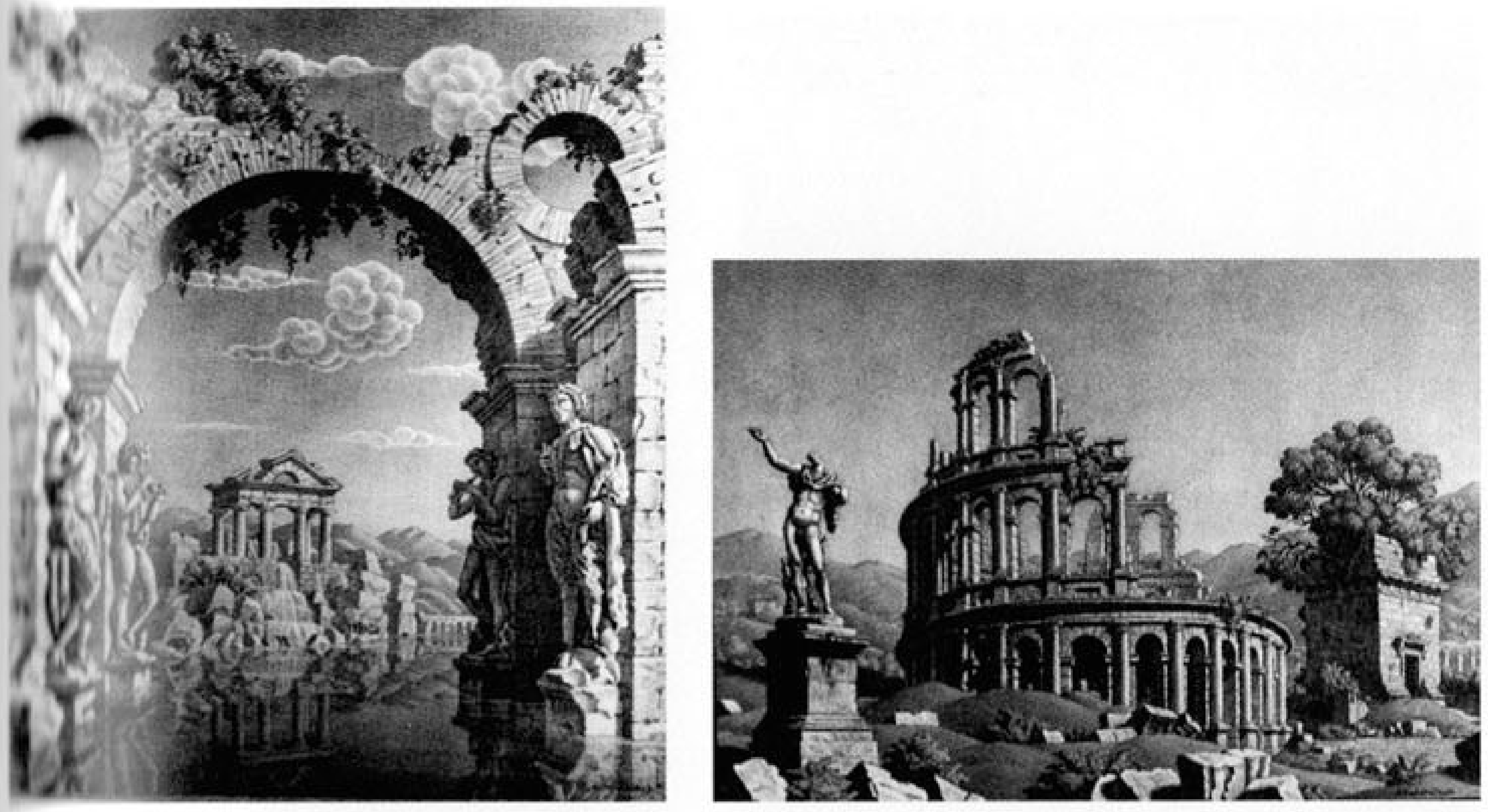
Galtsev's dark, dank bunker (shot at Mosfilm studios) is a poor surrogate home, evidently the cellar of a disused church. Galtsev has done little to domesticate it. The main difference between the bunker and the hostile world outside is the relatively stationary camera through which we view it (and the other internal spaces of war). As announced by the remarkable first shot of Galtsev's hand, the emphasis here shifts to the framing of shots, blocking of characters and the *mise-en-scène*. Space becomes a passive arena for human actions where a semblance of family can arise; moreover, here the elements of nature are restored to order by

The fresco in *Ivan's Childhood*.

The bunker in *Ivan's Childhood*.

being put to use by humans: hot water cleanses Ivan; plants are enlisted for intelligence purposes; and the wood fire warms. There are moments of illumination in the bunker, especially when they listen to the record of Fëdor Shaliapin. However, even this space is overtaken by the war which confuses day and night, up and down, and the order of the elements: first through Ivan's dream of being at the bottom of a well, and then in his violent fantasy of revenge, when his mother and sister emerge from the bunker's shadows.

It is only outside, in the midst of war, that one sees cathedral spaces: a ruined arch of the church with the remnants of a fresco of the Mother



Neo-classical scenes from Andrea Beloborodoff's series *La Grande Italia* (1930s).

of God and the infant Christ, and the ruined home of the old man, where the only things left standing are the tombstone-like chimneys, tree trunks and the canopy over the well. These vertical structures attract the characters as remnants of (lost) human order. Though the crazed man's house around is completely destroyed, Ivan enters through the door and leaves provisions for the host. (In *Nostalghia* Domenico also walks through an unattached door in the columned space of his home.) After Katasonych's death Kholin lights his cigarette between the icon and a raging flame; when he enters the bunker it suddenly resembles a church during liturgy, replete with a bell, a flame, crucifixes and an altar with bread. However, Kholin disrupts this mood by ringing the bell in an act of violent frustration. The combination of classical architectural form and unsettling absurdity in these scenes associates Tarkovsky with the surreal neo-classicism of an Andrea Beloborodoff or a Giorgio de Chirico.

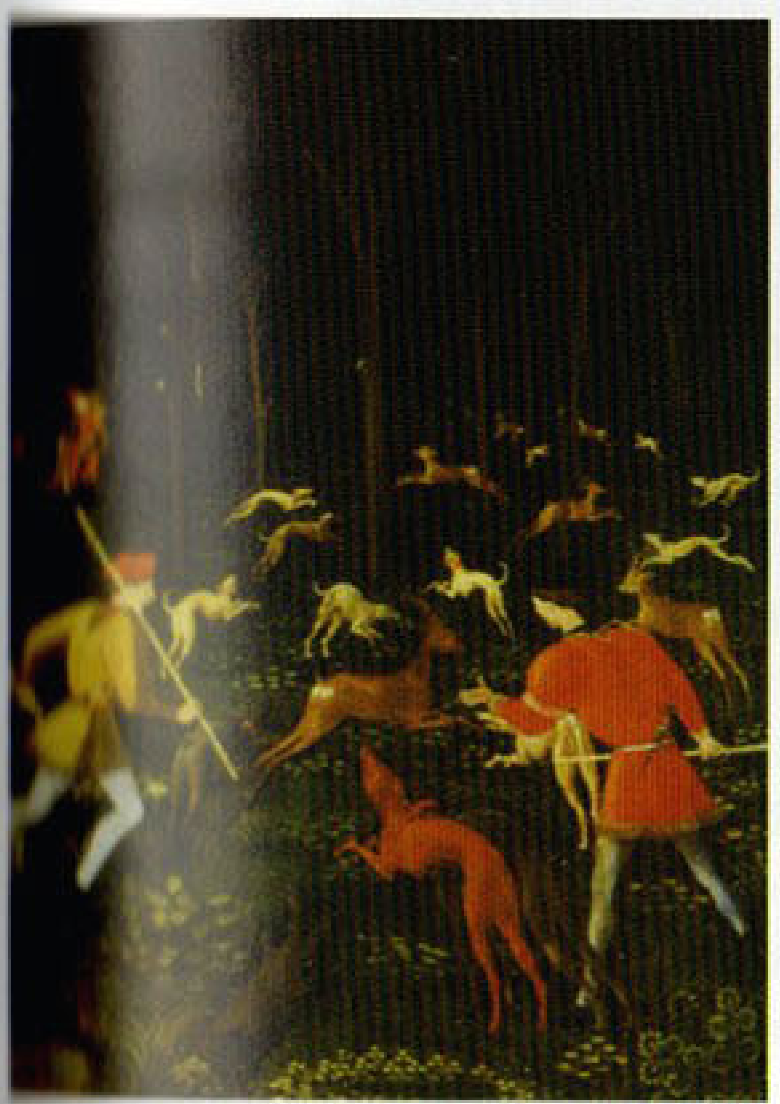
The scene of the crazed old man is immediately followed by the only significant contrast to the dark world of devastation: Masha's infirmary and the nearby birch forest. Tarkovsky wrote that he and his crew searched long for this location, where 'the sterile birch texture of a lifelessly beautiful forest somehow "hints", if only most indirectly, at the unavoidable "breath of the plague" within whose radius the film's characters exist'.[6] In the forest the birches are like the columns of a natural cathedral, amongst which the characters and the camera execute a

A cathedral of birch (*Ivan's Childhood*).

complex set of manoeuvres: Masha performs a strange mating dance with Kholin, full of rather violent sexual innuendo, and then is shown returning alone to the strains of a waltz. It could justifiably be said that nothing particularly revelatory occurs in the birch forest. The characters, at any rate, are not forthcoming in their words or gestures. Indeed, the rhythm of the movement may be more important than its putative significance. Tarkovsky jokingly described his direction of the scene as limited to walking alongside the camera and counting out 'one-two-three one-two-three'. It is indeed the rhythm of the episode, more than its content, that explains the sudden change in vision experienced by the camera and the characters. Unlike in the scenes of crossing the flooded wood, where the camera's swoops and swerves make the protagonists seem vulnerable, the camera here merges with individual characters' perspectives, suggesting a singular elevation of vision. Having been excluded from the ritual, Galtsev quickly shrinks as a character and seems for a while endlessly less mature even than Ivan, at least until he returns from the unexpected mission of delivering Ivan 'to the other side'. The spectral and claustrophobic space of the forest allows for the violation of norms of behaviour and cognition; it is a place where rape occurs as easily as revelation.

The cathedral is the dominant architectural form of *Andrei Rublëv*. The prologue to the film reads like a visual homage to *Ivan's Childhood* as the peasant aviator Efim passes through a flooded wood into the ruin of a columned church, where in a single long take the camera captures him in unexpected positions within the frame. The first episode, 'The Jester', set in a peasant hut with several wooden columns, is also replete with folds in space. First, the jester walks outside and instantly appears on the roof, hanging down over the doorway. The second instance comes during a 360° pan around the peasant hut (extant only in the original edit); beginning with Andrei and Kirill, the shot proceeds clockwise around the hut until it arrives back at the initial position to find Kirill absent. As I discuss in chapter Nine, these long takes work together with the location both to foster a sense of fluid continuity and immediately to disrupt it, thereby conveying a specific temporal pressure.

The episode 'The Last Judgement', which takes place mainly inside a newly whitewashed cathedral, features two very long takes during which Iusov's camera weaves in and out of the columns, surprising the figures in unexpected locations and poses. The cathedral begins as an almost profane place, the site of petty squabbling amongst Andrei's crew: everyone is on edge because of the summer heat and the idleness caused by Andrei's inexplicable inability to begin the painting of *The Last Judgment*. The scene is interrupted by a sequence showing the blinding of a crew of masons by the prince's personal guard. Echoing the haunting forests of Paolo Uccello's *Hunt in the Forest* and René Magritte's *Signature in Blank* (1965), the sombre wood provides a natural counterpoint to the pristine cathedral, suggesting the dangerous forces that lurk amidst the holiest of spaces. Indeed, Andrei responds to the sequence (which he either remembers or imagines) by daubing the cathedral walls with ashes. This seeming desecration actually marks Andrei's overcoming of his painter's block: if only in the most abstract sense, Andrei learns to give form to evil. The images Andrei eventually creates are not absolute. It is only when the cathedral is besieged by the Mongols and gutted by fire, when Theophanes returns from



Paolo Uccello, *The Hunt in the Forest* (detail, 1460s).

the dead to declare that heaven 'is not at all how you imagine it', and when snow falls in the church, that the building becomes a true temple, no longer an outward representation of human ideas about God but a site of commemoration and of epiphany.

The final columned space in *Andrei Rublëv* is the scaffold and pulley system used to elevate the bell that Boriska forges in the final episode of the film. Frequently interpreted as the redemption of creative endeavour, this scene is no less than the restoration of the possibility of ascent.

It has often been noted that Tarkovsky adapted *Solaris* to his own poetics by bringing it down to earth, rooting Kelvin's cosmic experiences in his home. However, it is no less important that Tarkovsky chose a story based on the power of an uncanny (*unheimlich*) Ocean endowed with an alien intelligence. In many respects *Solaris* takes to an extreme the spatial drama of *Ivan's Childhood*, where human habitations are overtaken by the flows of water as much as by the shifting front of war. Surrounding the home as a churning ocean, penetrating within as uncanny rain, water becomes an all-destructive force. At the same time, in *Solaris* Iusov's camera reaches its own fluid extreme, never stopping for a still shot of anything, in any place, always reminding us that space is constructed at the intersections of visual planes as a disruption of natural flows.

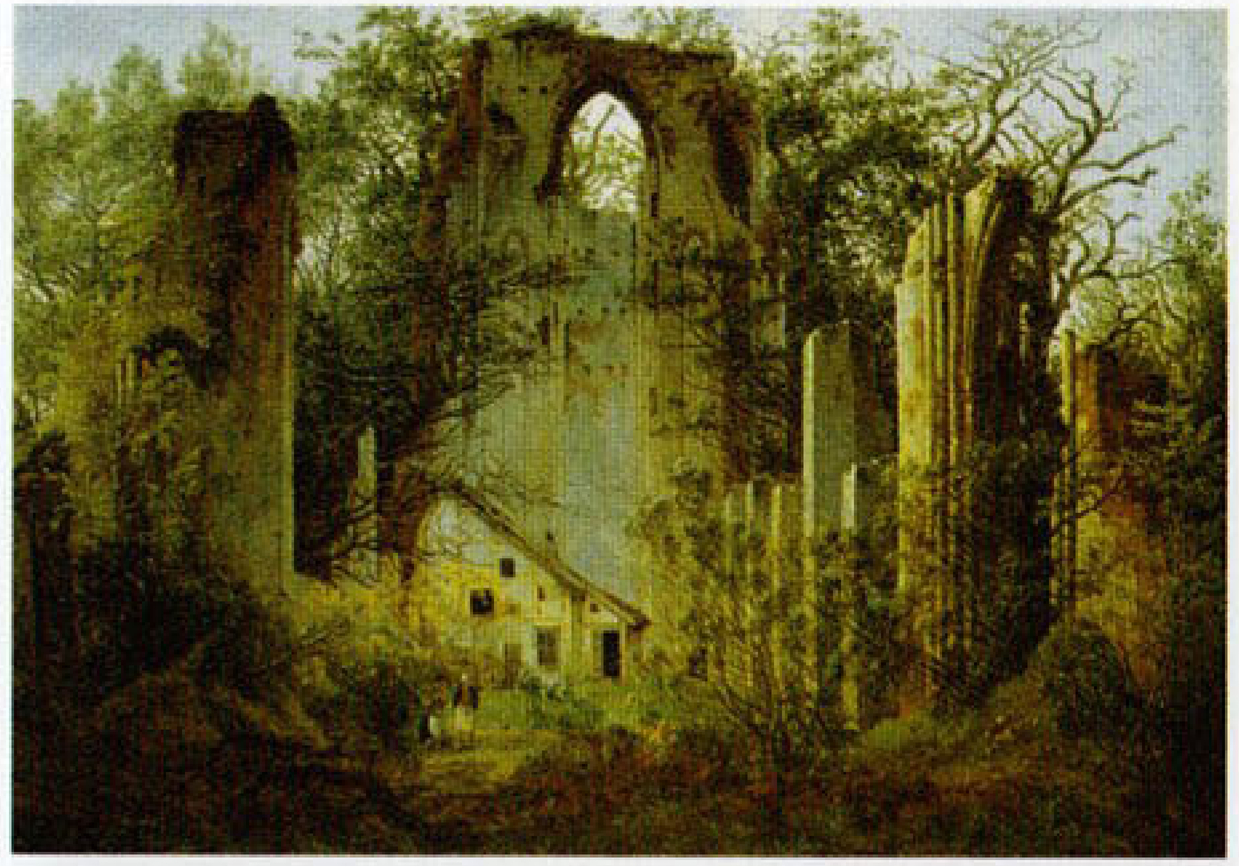
Solaris is unique among Tarkovsky's films for the lack of any sacred space akin to the forests and cathedrals of *Ivan's Childhood* and *Andrei Rublëv*. It was, after all, the only film Tarkovsky shot mostly in the studio, on an elaborate and expensive set that itself became a main attraction for visitors to the studio, who included Akira Kurosawa. If in *Andrei Rublëv* the widescreen format had opened the intimate scenes to the infinitude of space, in *Solaris* it has the opposite effect, to surround the figures with rounded walls that curve around the characters. In fact, insofar as the spacecraft consists of pure geometric grids and claustrophobic tunnels, it might be said that *Solaris* lacks any human spaces at all. If Ivan respects the old man's obliterated home by entering through what remains of the door, in *Solaris* Hari fails to understand the very principle: she rips right through the metal door, leaving (in Kelvin's words) a 'mere semblance' (*vidimost' odna*). True, the inhabitants of the orbiting station try to domesticate the spaces. Gibarian's cabin contains many of the visual elements of Kris's earthly home; Snaut shows Kris how Gibarian attached paper strips to the vents to imitate the rustle of leaves. But this fails to save Gibarian (the problem, he says, is not homelessness but 'something to do with conscience'). The closest the characters come to shaping the spatial manifold into a habitation is during the 30 seconds of weightlessness in the orbital's library, accompanied by images of Bruegel and by the strains of Bach. Snaut chooses it for his birthday party because 'at least it has no windows' and thus allows at least a semblance of insulation from the Ocean. However, the characters' weightless state and fluid movements seem to remind them of their precarious state between the cosmic void and the alien flows of Solaris. Hari's temptation to become incarnate in nature, essentially in time, fails to result in life; she remains a mere flow of neutrinos, and her only recourse is to freeze herself solid. Only in his dream does Kris transform his cabin into home; but this location is characterized by multiple folds that undermine his security. First Hari appears in bed next to him, then Snaut makes an impossibly quick circuit of the spacecraft, then finally Kris dreams of multiple Haris occupying the same space at the same time. While Kris does end up domesticating his cabin with objects from earth, there is the suspicion that they are also solarian copies; typical is the shot of a glass jug containing various everyday objects and filled with water. They are no more real than the solarian objects that appear in his delirious vision of his home. And yet, as is underscored by the presence of Soviet coins embossed with the profile of Lenin, they are minted with such solidity and authenticity that they serve to return Kris to material existence.

Slavoj Žižek reads the ending of *Solaris* as meaning that 'within the radical Otherness, we discover the lost object of our innermost longing'.[7] The fallacy in Žižek's approach is to reduce complex narratives to the logic of a classic bait-and-switch operation. Tarkovsky is not choosing 'home' over 'the Other' of an unknown and unknowable nature, nor is he substituting one for the other; he is investigating precisely the interflow between two fundamentally unstable configurations of space. Thus while the 'prologue on earth' roots Lem's story in the earth, it both begins and ends with depictions of the flows that destabilize any sense of location as such.

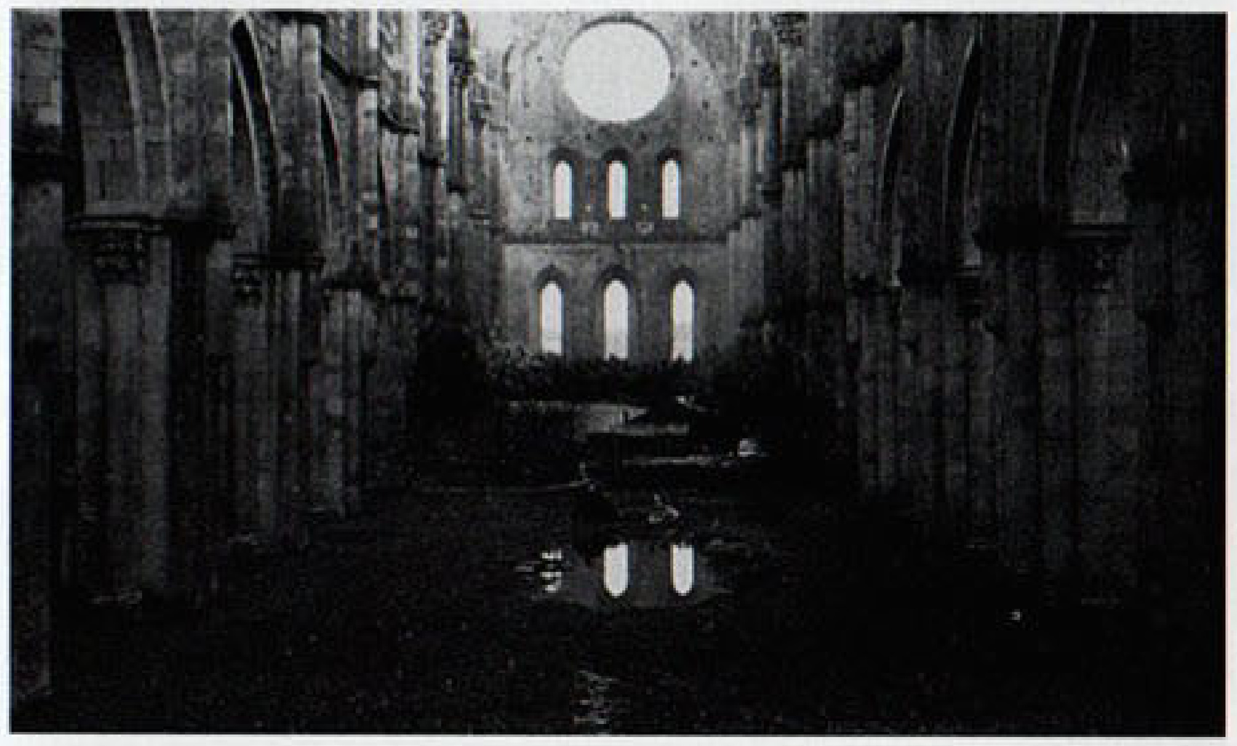
Like *Solaris*, *Mirror* both begins and ends in the space of an idyllic home, but it is no more an idyll than its predecessor. Iusov defected from Tarkovsky's team in the build-up to the shoot not only because he disagreed with the ethics of this autobiographical project (as Iusov has always explained it), but because its intensely discontinuous storytelling and editing fundamentally contradicted the fluid style Iusov had perfected in *Solaris*. The first sequence after the opening credits suggests a home like that in *Solaris*, invaded by a floating camera before which even the wind and inanimate objects manifest an alien will. But the fire behind the house, like the bonfire made by Ignat outside the narrator's apartment, turns these places into shrines of a kind, and the final shot places all the temporalities and spatialities of the film within the cathedral-like space of the forest. It is a direct step from here to the final shot of *Nostalghia*, where the lost home emerges from within the ruined cathedral at Galgano, both of which are simultaneously emerging from and being reclaimed by nature. It is tantamount to a declaration by Tarkovsky that he has successfully balanced the three spatial configurations of his imagination.

In fact, these shots betray the ubiquitous temptation of romanticism in Tarkovsky's films, underscored by the fact that the finale of *Nostalghia* directly references Caspar David Friedrich's hyper-romantic *Ruin at Eldena* (1824). This romanticism is in full display in the finale to *Sacrifice*, where fire transforms the desolate home into a natural shrine to itself. However, this romanticism is mitigated by Tarkovsky's reluctance to consummate the transformation of ruined home into a shrine; after all, the ending of *Nostalghia* is also reminiscent of the desolate finale to Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero*. The very sequences of *Mirror* that bridge the times and spaces also contain the seeds of their own desolation – namely, the winds that scatter the objects from the table and the shot of a trash-filled well, both of which mark an acknowledgement of the entropic force of nature and of history. Today the village of Ignat'evo, where *Mirror* was filmed, has radically changed from its state *circa* 1973. The open spaces have filled with new construction, increasingly in the style of American suburbs, each house surrounded by a ten-foot fence. It is the epoch of enclosure in the Russian countryside, where each individual seeks to create a separate zone, perhaps even inspired by Tarkovsky's idyll of the country home with its private memories. It is not just the ubiquitous rubbish tips astride each settlement that make any idealization impossible. Across the Moscow River from Ignat'evo is an idle factory that presents a familiar post-Soviet landscape. It is impossible today to believe in Tarkovsky's domestic idyll; but could that have been Tarkovsky's point?

One wonders whether it was not this very sight that led Tarkovsky from *Mirror* to the post-industrial desolation of *Stalker*, shot mainly at



Caspar David Friedrich, *Ruin at Eldena* (1824).



The ruin at Galgano (*Nostalghia*), between Friedrich's romantic idyll and Rossellini's apocalyptic nightmare.

Still from Roberto Rossellini, *Germany, Year Zero*.

an idle Soviet power station in the outskirts of Tallinn, Estonia, and at an active one on the river in Moscow. As Tarkovsky's style became more elementary, the three dominant spaces of his world achieved ever purer expression: the rickety apartment alongside the railway tracks that serves as home; the nature of the Zone, which appears in league with an alien will; and the cathedral space of the 'Room of Desires' to which the three men trudge, where their own wishes will reorganize their world. The antechamber to the Room – where the protagonists decide to forego this test of their will – was especially designed as a columned 'temple' standing right on the lapping waters (OS 274).

Many attempts have been made to define what is meant by the 'Zone' in *Stalker*. For Raymond Bellour it is an image in which dream is indistinguishable from memory.[8] For Žižek it is 'the *material presence*, the Real of an absolute Otherness incompatible with the rules and laws of our universe'.[9] More specifically, Žižek lists several connotations of the word 'Zone' in the Soviet imaginary: a prison camp; the site of an ecological disaster; the area where elites live; foreign territory; or a site of cosmic incursions such as meteorites. Žižek concludes that 'the very indeterminacy of what lies beyond the limit is primary'. In fact, the limit itself – or rather the act of delimitation – is the primary condition for the 'presence of the Other', the source of 'the void that sustains desire'. In many respects the Zone is simply the demarcated area within which an event can occur, akin to the screen in the cinema. Tarkovsky defined the Zone as 'not a territory, but a test that results in a man either withstanding or breaking. Whether a man survives or not depends on his sense of individual worth, his ability to distinguish what is important from what is transient'.[10] The Zone, then, is the quintessence of Tarkovsky's spaces: a locus of experience formed of inquisitive human gazes and an uncanny impersonal gaze that cannot simply be identified with the camera. The Zone is where one goes to see one's innermost desires. It is, in short, the cinema.

'Roadside Picnic'
near Tuchkovo,
summer 2006.

'Zone' in Tuchkovo,
summer 2006.

3 Screen

Tarkovsky frequently defined the authenticity he sought on screen as 'the illusion of reality'. This aspiration is probably impossible and most certainly unwise; as numerous 'reality' television shows have demonstrated, the more uncritical the attempt to 'catch life unawares' the more it is liable to seem uncanny, forced or rehearsed. Indeed, the real may only be discernible on film in its very refusal to be represented. Therefore, throughout history artists have repeatedly discovered that they are the most realist when they foreground the very strictures of observing and recording, that is when they subordinate representation to presentation.

Béla Balász once observed that the 'absolute evidence of reality' may be possible only in nature films because only 'Plants and animals do not act for the director. And since such glimpsed scenes cannot be imaginary, they possess something metaphysically unsettling for the man who is terrified of the uncontrollable power of his fantasy.'[1] Perhaps the least realistic moments in Tarkovsky's films come when his animals perform complex movements as if on cue, manifesting an alien will that is at once within and outside the aesthetic event. The fact that the cruel treatment of animals in *Andrei Rublëv* – Kirill's beating of his dog, the burning cow, the horse that falls and is lanced – has always been the most controversial element of the film shows how disconcerting it can be to have the fiction ruptured by a sudden consciousness of reality; as Akira Lippit has observed of Eisenstein's *Strike*, 'the actuality of the animal slaughter [. . .] imposes from outside the diegesis a taste of death, of the real'.[2] A similar reaction is perhaps elicited by the frequent shots of children observing the action from within the frame, for instance, during the jester's dance or in the scene of the Russian Calvary. At such moments the camera seems to ask how the scenes look to those innocent of the artifice. '*What* we see could become nature; but the fact *that* we see it is wholly unnatural', explained Balász.

Given the inexorable artifice of film it may be instructive to lay greater stress on the first member of Tarkovsky's formula 'the illusion of reality'. After all, in his lectures to student directors, Tarkovsky clearly stated: 'It is impossible to photograph reality; you can only create its image' (UR 45). As I showed in chapter Two, far from trying to reproduce or even represent nature, Tarkovsky understood that the spatiality of film – and also the idea of anything happening in that space – is mediated first and foremost by the screen zone. While for other filmmakers this may have led to an obsession with meta-cinematic narratives and shots (from Antonioni's *Blow-up* to Kieślowski's *Camera Buff*), Tarkovsky makes his viewers question the medium by engaging them directly in the composition of the image upon the screen.

Vivian Sobchack has instructively classified the prevailing conceptions of the screen as three metaphors: the picture-frame, the window and the mirror. Tarkovsky's early films explore all three qualities of the screen. The action in *The Killers* is theatrically framed by a wall of frosted glass that includes us in the private world of the bar while rendering the world beyond sinister in its impenetrability. In *Steamroller and Violin* the shop window displays mirrors that provide Sasha with a kaleidoscopic view on the world beyond. In *Ivan's Childhood* the boy's individual drama is played out against the background of war, creating a deep space that is sometimes at odds with the foreground. Here the screen begins to be used in a way reminiscent of Jean Renoir, as a field of varying depth, held together by the crossing of the characters' and spectators' gazes. In the angry conversation between Griaznov and Ivan, Tarkovsky wrote: 'only the background – the work of the soldiers outside the window – adds

The screen as frame: Tarkovsky between the trees (*Andrei Rublëv*).

The screen as window: the princes' feud (*Andrei Rublëv*)

an element of life and gives the spectator material for further thought and associations' (ST 33; ZV 127). As Sobchack concludes, insofar as 'all three metaphors relate [. . .] only indirectly to the dynamic activity of viewing that is engaged in by both the film and the spectator', they suppress the 'exchange and reversibility of perception and expression' and 'the intrasubjective and intersubjective foundations of cinematic communication'.[3] To understand Tarkovsky it is imperative to develop this complex sense of the screen as a locus of interchange between world, image and spectator.

André Bazin once compared the cinema screen to 'the little flashlight of the usher, moving like an uncertain comet across the night of our waking dream, the diffuse space without shape or frontiers that surrounds the screen'.[4] The screen does not simply illuminate objects; it creates the space in which spectators encounter reality. Bazin's image vividly recalls the river crossing in *Ivan's Childhood*, where the frame is continually reconstituted by the camera, the figures and the enemy flares.

The screen as mirror: Foma at the river looks into camera (*Andrei Rublëv*).

It is also suggestive vis-à-vis the icons in the finale of *Andrei Rublëv*, which always extend beyond the frame, and of the widescreen video monitors in *Solaris*. The screen conjures a world that aspires to shape our vision of the world beyond the frame.

There is, therefore, an entire ethics of the screen. When working on *Andrei Rublëv*, Tarkovsky was asked to react to Jerzy Kawalerowicz's claim that historical films should seek to estrange contemporary spectators' 'automatism' by showing them alien types of movement and gesture. Tarkovsky disagreed emphatically: 'this distracts the spectator's attention, focusing it on what is secondary'.[5] While Tarkovsky implicitly agreed that the task of film was to overcome modern distraction, he saw the way to achieve this not as *showing* spectators a vision of reality, but by *eliciting* from them a new kind of vision. As filmmaker and critic Jean Epstein once wrote, 'There is no still-life [*nature morte*] on the screen; the objects are ways of seeing [*attitudes*]'.[6] By extension, cinema is a field where intellect coincides with the most visceral experience, where somatic engagement in the plot (suspense) coincides with intellection (suspension).

It was here more than anywhere else that Tarkovsky showed himself a student of Robert Bresson, who allegedly explained his poetics with reference to Leonardo da Vinci's dictum 'Think about the surface of the work. Above all think about the surface.'[7] In his lectures Tarkovsky elaborated:

> In his pictures [Bresson] turns into a demiurge, the creator of a world which almost turns into reality because there is nothing in it to reveal artificiality, intentionality or the violation of a kind of unity. In him everything is erased nearly to the point of inexpressivity. This is expressivity taken to such a degree of precision and laconism that it ceases to be expressive [UR 47].

Of the difficulties that arise from this approach the most conspicuous is perhaps Tarkovsky's rejection of psychology in his characterizations, which as a result seem wooden, passive or simply bland. Spectators rarely identify with Tarkovsky's characters enough to sympathize with them. Indeed, Tarkovsky's actors testify with remarkable unanimity that his direction of them was usually limited to external positioning and gesture; he consistently avoided discussing with them what they should be feeling or thinking. Tarkovsky's reasons are illumined by his comments on Michelangelo Antonioni and Tonino Guerra's *L'Avventura*. Tarkovsky remarked that the unprepossessing plot of the film ('the film's heroes unsuccessfully seek a young woman who has disappeared without a trace') was 'free of any symbolic or allegorical information. The authors simply follow the people's behaviour with unusual precision and attention. A tiring and frustrating search. Without superfluous ("momentous") words and forced ("expressive") actions.'[8] In our common parlance we might speak of such a film as 'flat', just as we do of medieval art that resisted linear perspective, dramatic posing and allegorical puzzles. However, as in the icon, the refusal of surface expressivity is merely the consequence of a different kind of relation between image and viewer. Just as the tension of *L'Avventura* (and, in a different sense, *Blow-up*) was based wholly on 'observations', so did Tarkovsky's films resist any separation of the image from the actual act of looking – and of being seen.

The implacability of Tarkovsky's screen could be as frustrating for the actors as for the spectator. Tarkovsky liked to cite a maxim he attributed to René Clair, that the director does not work with actors, he just pays them (*UR* 41). At times Tarkovsky followed Robert Bresson's example of using non-professionals, such as the poet Nikolai Glazkov as the flying peasant Efim in *Andrei Rublëv*. In some cases Tarkovsky explained his casting of non-actors in terms of 'typage': his producer Tamara Ogorodnikova played Christ's mother in *Andrei Rublëv* (and small roles in the next two films) on the strength of her 'Russian' features (she is strikingly reminiscent of the poet Anna Akhmatova), while real foreign journalists filled out the audience at Berton's debriefing in *Solaris*. Preferring to cultivate a stable of his own actors, who appeared in film after film, Tarkovsky avoided using actors with established personas, with the notable exceptions of Donatas Banionis (in *Solaris*), who by 1970 was a major Soviet star, Oleg Iankovsky (in *Nostalghia*) and Erland Josephson, one of Bergman's favourite actors (in *Nostalghia* and *Sacrifice*). The ideal actor creates 'the sense of a real man who is not showing the spectator that he is doing something or bearing an idea, as we say, but is completely and impossibly convincing, genuinely unique. Unique and not expressive. He is in his right place, and this is the highest degree of expressivity for an actor in the cinema' (*UR* 41). However, the peculiar inexpressivity of Tarkovsky's characters was far from being some kind of innate or pristine authenticity; it required from actors no less skill and effort (and patience) than Stanislavsky's Method. Banionis

has spoken candidly about the tension that arose from Tarkovsky's refusal to provide psychological motivation for his instructions: 'I was supposed to turn just so, to continue moving for so many seconds, and to turn also in the course of a certain number of seconds – not a second more or less.'[9] Banionis felt he was not acting but 'posing'; but on the screen it came differently: 'The continual need to count prevented me from concentrating during the shoot, but in the frame you can't see whether I am thinking about something or just counting one-two-three . . . That was the director's conception: a conception of genius.' Indeed, 'I needed the actor to dissolve in the [film's] conception', Tarkovsky once said (*UR* 36). Like Hari in *Solaris*, actors' minds are blank slates, to be constructed in the act of viewing on the basis of their relative positions in physical and narrative space. As with Hari, our emotional attachment with the characters is likely to be limited to frustration at their impassivity and the shame that arises from seeing others – and being seen ourselves – in the frailty of a human 'identity'.

Like the figures in an icon, Tarkovsky's characters may seem 'flat' until one realizes the intensity of the gazes that cross the plane in all directions and from all sources. In a sense, this was Tarkovsky's starting point in *Andrei Rublëv*, which sought to get behind some of Russia's most famous icons to capture the kind of life-experience that could have given rise to them. In the process of resolving the relationship between icon and film, image and narrative, Tarkovsky not only developed techniques for his subsequent films; he also formulated his ideas in his single most important essay 'Imprinted Time' ('Zapechatlënnoe vremia', 1967], which placed his cinema poetics into a rich tradition of Russian aesthetic thought.

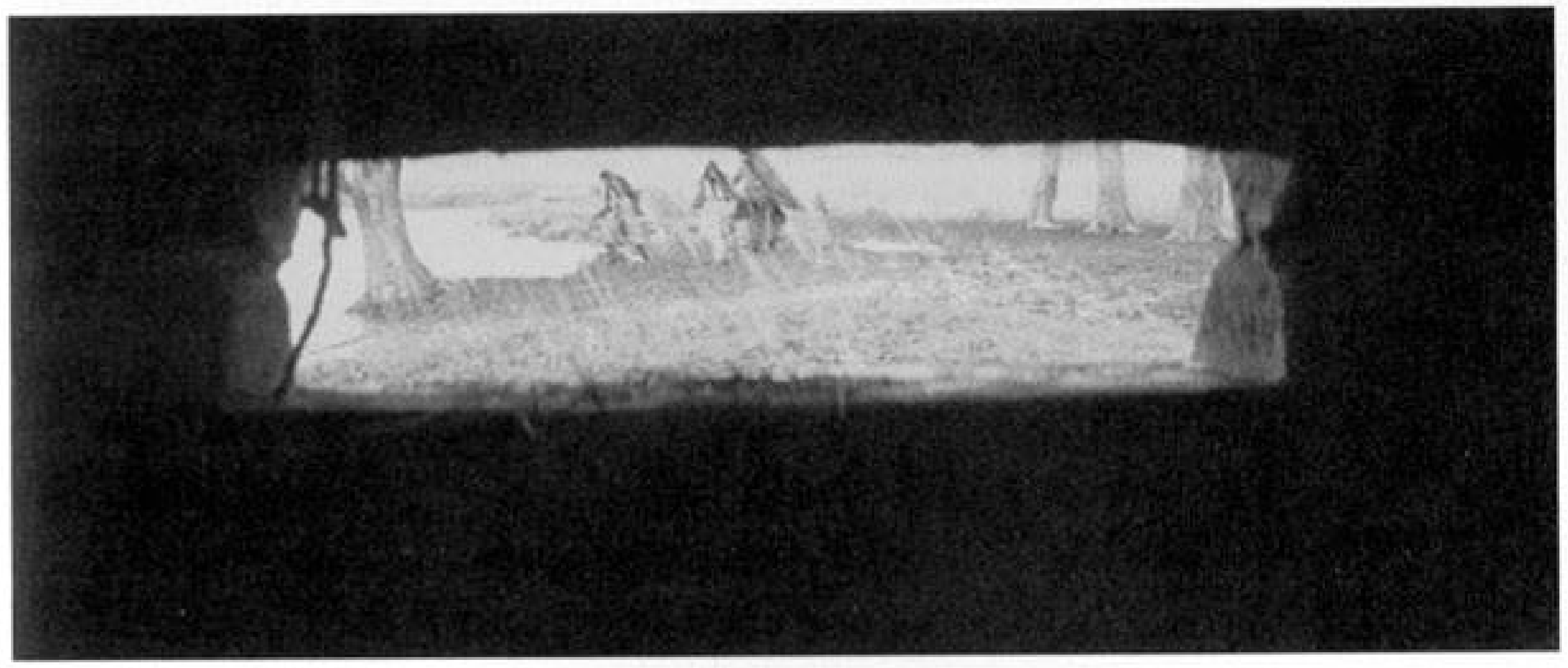
In *Andrei Rublëv* the drama of vision begins with the prologue about the flying peasant Efim. The film opens with a shot of men lashing the balloon over a fire; the shot closes with one of the men turning his gaze towards the camera. Such shots frequently recur in Tarkovsky's films, for instance with Hari in *Solaris*; it could be that the camera wants to avoid the direct gaze of the characters, but (especially in Hari's case) it seems more as if the characters fear being abandoned by the camera. The next shot (in the 1969 version) shows Efim hurrying across a river and ends with him also looking into the camera. The third shot begins with the first man turning his gaze away from the camera, back to his work. The fourth shot shows Efim mooring his boat behind the other men and running into the church, as his pursuers become visible and audible on the river. These shots describe a classic chase, to be sure, but it is a peculiarly visual pursuit. After Efim ascends the tower and takes flight, we see that his endeavour is not only one of new physical movement, more fluid even than that of animals or the river below, but also of new vision.

Iusov's camera insistently reminds us that it is capable of creating and recording a wide variety of motions; the vertigo of Efim's flight is produced by swooping shots from Efim's point of view (taken from a crane and a helicopter), but also alternating shots where the camera seems to lurch around a static Efim. His flight comes to a sudden halt in a freeze-frame, after which the air of his balloon is released into the river. Does he fly far, as suggested by the crane shots, or just a few yards, as is suggested by the static shots that hover unchangedly over the same river bend and village? Does the horse rolling on the ground represent an angelic 'He is saved', or the face of a nature as indifferent as the camera? In any case the linked dreams of flying and of total vision both run up against the solidity and immobility of the earth, which is contrasted to the graceful fluidity of flight, the river and the horse. The prologue declares that the story will concern the challenge of attaining transcendent vision on the earth without succumbing to impossible fantasies of fluency or weightlessness.

It is important to note that here, as in other scenes, the drama of vision is much more pronounced in the original edit of the film from 1966, entitled *The Passion according to Andrei*. Here, as Efim's collaborator turns around to face the camera at the end of the first shot, we immediately see and hear the crowd chasing Efim. The implication is that the first man has heard the commotion and is looking in our direction to identify its source. However, this apparent connection is actually impossible because the crowd is too distant to be audible, nor does it eventually arrive on the scene from this direction. What, then, does he look at? We cannot dwell for long on this mystery, because new ones keep arising, not only in the juxtaposition of shots, but also within shots and in the soundtrack. For instance, as Efim pushes off from the church, an unseen woman seems to whisper 'O Lord', but this detail remains enigmatic. The greater conspicuousness of the discontinuities in the original version warns the viewer not to rush to conclusions, but rather to focus on containing the full amplitude of multivalent reality with a single field of vision.

The first episode, 'The Jester', extends this meditation on filmic vision in a number of ways. First there is the Tarkovskian rain, which falls in sheets in front of the camera while the three monks jog along in the background, bathed in sunlight. There are similar screens of rain at the end of this episode and throughout the film, most notably in the recurring images of the monks under an oak tree and in the final shot of four horses on a spit of land (which also stand in sunlight, batting away flies with their tails). This insistent rain exasperated even so patient a viewer as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who exclaimed: 'What rain! Antediluvian, unbelievably heavy rain, time to bang together Noah's ark! Life is beaten down by this rain, and those silent horses are washed up, and the Rublëv frescoes are washed away, and nothing remains . . .'[10] It is too conspicuous to be dismissed as amateurishness or oversight; Tarkovsky was well aware of the kitschy implications of using 'ciné-rain' from fire-hoses (*UR* 54). Evidently the rain here is not really a sign that 'it is raining'; instead, such screens of water (invariably pumped out of those very same fire-hoses) effectively aestheticize the world by holding it at the distance of visibility, converting it from actuality to potentiality. A similar effect is achieved when we realize that we have been watching the monks through a window that matches the proportions of the screen; the camera recedes to show the jester who embarks on a circuit of the hut. This extremely long take begins with a shift between three planes of depth, and then flattens the three-dimensional space into a flat, cylindrical panorama. The two-dimensionality of the screen is thus both a limitation and a condition of the versatility of the filmic narrative. Just as the narrative import of this episode (if any such reduction be possible) is the monks' and the jester's observation of each other, so its point is to engage the spectator in an active interchange with the screen.

The epilogue of *Andrei Rublëv* sets the camera in direct relation to the work of the icon-painter, as if testing to see if it can measure up. It



The window in the hut (*Andrei Rublëv*).

is interesting that Tarkovsky wholly entrusted the photographing of the icons to Iusov, who in this regard appears as a master alongside Rublëv.[11] (Indeed, Tarkovsky is more like Boriska than Andrei, more a maker than an observer.) Iusov has pointed out that the widescreen lens precluded the vertically orientated icon being placed within the frame, but encouraged the camera to move over the icon's surface, dwelling on specific details and textures. As Tarkovsky said at the time,

> It's impossible to show Andrei Rublëv's magnificent icons in such a short time, so we tried to create an impression of the totality of his work by showing selected details and guiding the viewer past a sequence of detailed fragments towards the highest of Rublëv's creations, to the full shot of his famous *Trinity*. We wanted to bring the viewer to this work through a kind of dramaturgy of colour, asking him to move from particular fragments towards the whole, creating an impressionistic flow [ATI 24].

While *The Old Testament Trinity* is indeed shown in full, it is flanked by broad bands of empty space, which underscore its subordination to the space of the cinematic screen. Another telling detail is that, while Iusov was able to shoot the actual icons in the Tretyakov Gallery and in the Cathedral of the Annunciation (which was handily filled with scaffolding at the time), he substituted a copy for the Saviour icon which is sprinkled with water. Apparently it was less important that the camera view the 'original' image than that it view the image through water, augmenting the play of distances that separate the viewer from the 'reality' represented on-screen. Both the motion of the camera and its distanciation via a watery film contribute to the shift in emphasis from the represented object to the very mode of its presentation. Recalling Pasternak's image, the cinematic story is the atmosphere or the plasma that surrounds the icons. The flat screen is revealed to be open in every direction as an enabling condition of vision.

At first glance the suggestion of a relationship between the cinema screen and the icon seems at best unlikely, even unproductive. The veneration of the icon is based on the presence of the represented saint in his or her physical image, whereas the screen is simply a blank wall that allows a transient dance of light. The traditional emphasis on presence in Russian aesthetics complicated the early reception of the cinema. In

one of the earliest known responses to the new art form, in 1896 Maxim Gorky characterized the 'moving photographs' as 'not life but the shadow of life [. . .] not movement but the soundless shadow of movement'.[12] Gorky likened the 'madness' of the cinema to Symbolism, the dominant aesthetic movement of the age, but the Symbolists themselves were far from enamoured with the new medium of art. After all, their ideal was an artwork that granted form to the elemental flows of being, so that the image might 'stream' onto the passive viewer. Like Henri Bergson, the Symbolists saw the cinema less as a continuous flow than as a discontinuous flickering of light that signalled the failure of the image. As Andrei Belyi wrote, 'Rhythm without image is chaos, the roar of primeval elements in the soul of man.'[13]

However, there were in Russian modernist aesthetics important resources for a more positive theorization of the screen as a membrane that facilitates communication between visible and invisible realms. The Symbolist Viacheslav Ivanov was well known for his ideal of breaking down the barrier between stage and audience (the word he used – *rampa* – could mean either the footlights or the raised stage). Ivanov considered the barrier 'the enchanted border between actor and spectator' which 'still divides the theatre [. . .] into two alien worlds: that which only acts and that which only perceives'.[14] At the same time, Ivanov warned against merely demolishing the barrier, insisting on 'an aesthetic resolution to the problem'.[15]

In short, the modernist dream of destroying the separation between stage and audience fostered a constant meditation about the nature of the separation and its bridging within the aesthetic event. Vsevolod Meyerhold in particular explored the possibility of a two-dimensional theatre that did not conceal, but explicitly called spectator attention to the necessity of mediation. Theatre theorist Alexander Bakshy suggested that Meyerhold's use of space shifted the emphasis from 'representation' to 'presentation'. When he turned to the cinema, Bakshy was naturally drawn to the screen not as a limitation, but as a crucial medium of meaning:

> Today the screen [. . .] is merely a neutral surface for carrying images, and only helps to emphasize the gap which divides between the two, and to make this link perform its liaison service the visual images must be hitched to the screen. In other words the screen must become a physical reality in the eyes of the

> audience, a part of the theater building which provides the graphic frame of reference for the very being of characters in space, as well as for the form in which they are presented to view.[16]

Only by acknowledging and utilizing its conventional limitations can the cinema maximize its impact upon the spectator: 'Once the picture is visually related to the screen and the subject of the picture is seen as presented unmistakably from the screen, a direct physical contact is established with the spectator, which is the condition of all theatrical intimacy.'[17] Bakshy encouraged the innovative use of the screen, including variable dimensions, split screens, surround screens and the simultaneous projection on adjacent screens, always with the goal of heightening the spectator's consciousness of the immateriality of the representation and the materiality of the very mode of presentation. Remarkably similar thoughts were expressed at the same time by Sergei Eisenstein. Speaking (in his distinctive English) in Hollywood in 1930, Eisenstein advocated the square screen, which allowed the vertical axis of composition to dominate over the lateral:

> the screen, as a faithful mirror, not only of conflicts emotional and tragic, but equally of conflicts psychological and optically spatial, must be an appropriate battleground for the skirmishes of both these optical-by-view, but profoundly psychological-by-meaning, spatial tendencies on the part of the spectator.[18]

The advocacy of variable spatiality was one means of exploiting the conventions of cinematic presentation to suggest something beyond visual representation.

In his own experimentation with screen shapes and conventions Tarkovsky was implicitly engaging with this tradition of Russian stage and cinema aesthetics. Tarkovsky's first films show him to be a devout proponent of widescreen cinema, a format that for some is linked to the tritest traditions of narrative cinema, in which the emphasis is wholly on the action or the landscapes, not on formal composition. Opponents of widescreen cinema cite Eisenstein's predilection for a square screen, in which vertical and horizontal axes bear equal weight, and in general to the experiments of the 1920s. For Tarkovsky (and Vadim Iusov) the widescreen was a return to just such experimentation with the shape of the cinematic image. *Solaris* was not only shot in widescreen, but it also features widescreen monitors at Kelvin's home (doubling as a videophone) and on the spacecraft. The subtle alternation between colour and black and white projection underscores the intentionality of Tarkovsky's visual experiment. At one point the characters (in colour) watch a film (in black and white) of the space authorities watching Berton's film (in colour). The authorities' response to this film is also indicative: 'You filmed clouds! Why did you film only clouds?' they exclaim. This says less about Berton as a cameraman than about them as viewers. After all, in the closing sequences Kris sees very much the same clouds over the planet Solaris, just before he discovers a simulacrum of his home on the planet's surface.

After *Solaris* Tarkovsky resorted to aspect ratios closer to the standard 4:3. When television sets are featured in *Mirror* and *Sacrifice* they have regular-size screens, appearing to serve more as furniture than as meta-cinematic topoi, though in *Sacrifice* the impending atomic apocalypse is rather conspicuously conveyed over a dying television broadcast. Like Bakshy, Tarkovsky replaces any notion that he is representing reality by an intense study of the modes in which reality may be presented. Speaking of his production of *Hamlet*, Tarkovsky directly addressed the problem of mediation: 'in no case should one destroy the fourth wall or speak directly to the audience. Something collapses here, I'm not sure what' (*MF* 297). However, his very next film, *Stalker*, features just such a collapse of the fourth wall, when the Stalker's wife addresses her monologue directly to the camera. Instead of seeking to conceal the screen or pass it over as 'reality', Tarkovsky is constantly playing with its mediation – not to overcome the separation between actor and audience, or between fiction and reality, but to transform their interrelation. As Deleuze has written, the screen is 'the cerebral membrane where immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and the future [. . .] independent of any fixed point'.[19]

The same obsession with aesthetic mediation also lay at the base of the Russian modernists' interest in the icon. There are two scenes in *Andrei Rublëv* that explicitly dramatize the distinction between iconic and screen presentation. In episode 2 ('Theophanes the Greek') Theophanes' and Andrei's dispute is shot in a single long take of almost three minutes, which commences with Foma crouching on the river bank. The camera rises together with Foma, but then dwells on Andrei and Theophanes, whose figures execute a complex ballet while the camera floats around them. As Andrei expounds a paradoxical understanding of the Russian people and the Crucifixion, the camera comes to rest on the back of his head and then cuts to a shot of a white cloth in flowing water; as the camera zooms out, this cloth is revealed to be the first shot of a new scene consisting of a Passion play, set in wintry Russia, accompanied by a drum and choral music, and featuring winged angels. Iusov has explained in general terms that the invisibility of the angels was ensured by the close coordination of dark and light elements in the frame, the careful selection of film and the use of optics that heightened the perspective on screen.[20] The voiceover of Andrei's theological argument continues throughout this sequence, but the intensity of the images makes it difficult to follow. The scene ends with a cut-back to Foma's face, as he crouches at the water's edge and dips his paintbrushes in the stream, setting white specks flowing away. The similarity between the first shot of the Crucifixion scene and the first one to follow it allows one to read both shots as representations of the same event seen by Foma first in his imagination and then in reality. In other words, Foma's fantasy of the Crucifixion sequence is formed by an event that actually follows it in earthly temporality, that of the washing of the brushes. The inscription on the cross, which corresponds not to the Gospel account but to the conventional wording on icons of the Crucifixion, suggests that the fantasy is caused by Foma imagining an icon: what he sees in a momentary flash of inspiration, the film can depict only as a sequential narrative in earthly time; moreover, the fantasy does not stand on its own, but remains attached to its subject's act of vision.

Similar ambiguity marks the scene where Andrei imagines the blinding of the masons. In episode 4, 'The Last Judgment', he is shown nervously biting his fingernails, his creativity evidently blocked by his unwillingness to paint an admonitory icon of the *Last Judgment*. The camera cuts to Andrei in a lighter moment, playing with the young princess in a palace of brilliant white stone, filled with the airborne poplar fluff that blankets Russia every spring. The scene, white on white, is almost blinding, and the Grand Prince squints agitatedly at the invisible reliefs that his henchman Stepan recommends painting with brighter colours. Fed up, the stonemasons leave for Zvenigorod to enter the employ of the prince's younger brother. Stepan then leads forth the prince's guard and they blind the stonemasons in gruesome fashion. The scene ends with white paint spilled into the flowing water. The next shot is like a negative image of this: a hand smearing dark paint over an immaculate white wall. The paint smear is not yet a fresco, but it does express Andrei's desire to form his raw horror into a visual representation, and to interrupt the flow of spilled blood and paint with an image. Curiously, when the holy fool looks at it in anguish the smear has a different shape, suggesting that it speaks in distinct ways to each pair of eyes. The last shot of the episode is also suggestive: after Andrei leaves, the remaining characters arrange themselves inside the church in two ranks (reminiscent perhaps of the ranks of saints in the iconostasis), and then the holy fool exits through the doors into the light and the rain, as if into the space of Rublëv's icon of the *Old Testament Trinity*. The deaths of Efim and Foma are shot so as to make the camera's mediation immediately palpable to the viewer; by contrast, Rublëv never once interferes with the transparency of the camera lens.

The flatness of the screen explains the flatness of Andrei Rublëv's character in the film. Just as 'Andrei's strength is his ability to enter the hide of any of his contemporaries', so also the 'character of Andrei's genius is an aggregate of sensations belonging to Kirill, both princes, Marfa, Stepan, and each separate character'.[21] Tarkovsky linked his use

The holy Fool exiting the church (*Andrei Rublëv*).

of a multi-centred set to the example of Vittorio Carpaccio, a Venetian master whose work expressed 'the sense of a promise of the explanation of the inexplicable': 'the centre of Carpaccio's many-figured compositions is *each* of his characters. Concentrating attention on *any* of the figures, you begin to understand with unerring clarity that everything else is merely an environment [*sreda*], an entourage constructed as a pedestal for this "incidental" character' (ST 50; ZV 147). Tarkovsky spoke of the way this ineffable environment or atmosphere 'condensed' on-screen as particular visual texture:

> Let's say a man is walking along a white wall covered in shells; the shape of the stones, the character of the cracks and the rustle of ancient seas that is condensed in their silence creates a chain of ideas, associations, a single part of the characterization. Another part appears when we take the opposite point of view and the hero is shown moving against the background of the dark-blue sea and black, arhythmically arranged pyramidal trees. He changes the angle of his head, arguing with the thoughts he has just had. In other words, we are moving not along a rational and logical path, where words and actions can immediately be judged, but along a poetic path.[22]

It may seem counter-intuitive to attribute texture to the cinema, which is devoid of a sense of touch; it is like the hand of a paralytic, 'which can only touch things from afar, but never grasp them'.[23] It is precisely this elusive attraction of the cinematic surface that intensifies our experience of its texture. In short, Tarkovsky's cinema was tied not to a particular shape of the screen, but to the very concept of the screen as the exterior skin of observed reality: 'Film directing starts [. . .] when the interior gaze of the person making the film [. . .] sees an image of the film, whether as a detailed series of episodes or only as the sensation of a texture and emotional atmosphere which must be reproduced on the screen' (ST 60). This texture is the product of the apparatus; Iusov spoke of 'communicating the texture of the image of the real world, thereby revealing its inner essence by the means of art, but using the best available optics and colour capabilities of the film-stock'.[24] But it is also a palpable state of matter; Tarkovsky cited the example of *Earth* (1930), directed by Aleksandr Dovzhenko and shot by Daniil Demutsky, where a low shot of a horse-driven plough shows 'two types of

ploughedness: the dark ploughed earth and the white clouds, which also seem ploughed'.[25] The screen, in sum, returns the image to tactile materiality.

The material thickness and opacity of the cinema screen might well be regarded as the central subject of *Mirror*, which is the story not of the filmmaker's life but of his visual imagination. Tarkovsky was frequently tempted to include himself in his films; his voice adds its criticisms of Berton at the press conference in *Solaris*. While he chose not to narrate *Mirror* himself, he did include a shot of his hand tossing the bird; the first edits also showed his face, but the studio's opposition to such self-indulgence perhaps strengthened his own doubts about whether his subjectivity could be represented by the very screen that in *Mirror* seems to look with his eyes. Several discrete levels of memory are interwoven with cinematic glimpses of history and significant paintings and photographs, as if in an attempt to measure the refractive power of the eye and the material resistance of the image. The ability of the screen to bring all of these impressions into a single frame is underscored at the end of the first episode in the narrative, which is set at the country home in Ignat'evo, before the war but after the departure of the husband. The episode (in vivid colour) ends with three figures standing before the burning shed in staggered formation and then with a shot of the mother standing at the well as the old man runs by, towards the fire. Then, in comparatively quick succession, there follow shots of the little boy asleep in bed (in colour), the edge of the forest blown by a wind (in black and white), and again the little boy (in colour), who utters 'papa', awakes and walks forwards as a white cloth flies across the frame. Each of these shots manifests the absence of the husband/father as an abhorrent vacuum that human memory and imagination strive to counteract. There then follows a confusing sequence of shots, all in black and white and all within the space of what we will learn to be the apartment of Aleksei, the film's protagonist: of the husband pouring water on the mother's hair over a large basin; of plaster falling in a torrent of water; of the mother walking under the falling plaster and reflected in a series of mirrors; and of an old woman seemingly walking out from the other side of a painting. Here, in a purely imaginary realm, the absence is replaced not by presence, but by the very multiplication of images in various refraction. The last two shots are especially complex. In the first, the panning camera shows the mother in three distinct framings, caused by

The final dream sequence in *Mirror*.

her being reflected in two mirrors and then, so to speak, in the flesh. The second shot initially appears to be compounded from two (one of the painting on the wall and another of the mother walking towards the camera), but then she reaches out a hand and touches the glass of the painting. The initial effect of both shots, in short, is both to reveal 'reality' as image and simultaneously to break the plane that holds the two separate.

The sequence ends with the beautiful colour shot of a hand held in flame (from a memory that appears later in the film), which could suggest an attempt to verify one's waking state or to awake from a state of torpor or temptation; sure enough the next shot – a magnificent panorama of the unseen protagonist's apartment, which situates the previous shots in a real space – is accompanied by the sound of a ringing telephone awakening Aleksei. There ensues an uncomfortable conversation between him and his mother, who is calling to inform him of the death of Elizaveta Pavlovna, her old co-worker at the printing plant, that very morning. If the preceding sequence had confused real and imaginary dimensions in space, this conversation confuses real and imaginary dimensions of time that seem to converge at the borderline moment of awakening. Aleksei asks his mother to provide a date for his memories

of his father's absence and the shed burning; she answers (1935), and he then asks the current time. This clash of real and imaginary is underscored by the camera, which in a single tracking shot (too smooth to be the Aleksei's point of view) surveys a window with an open book and a pigeon on the sill, a French poster for *Andrei Rublëv* showing the *Old Testament Trinity* in flames, and a framed photograph of the mother (i.e., of Tarkovsky's actual mother, who plays the old woman, *circa* 1935). Aleksei, oblivious to real time and unwilling to leave behind his eternally present memories, reacts to his mother's news only by (apparently) imagining the scene at the printing plant. Again, imaginary time seems to run in a direction opposite to that of real time.

These densely layered opening sequences convey abundant narrative information about the story without providing any sense of a plot, that is to say, without posing a clear question to which the spectator will be seeking an answer. The plot almost wholly consists of a circling amongst images: of the mother in memory, in imagination, in photographs. If there is a definable problem, it will be for the mother to enter real time and space for the son. It is strange that, when later Ignat opens the door for her, they do not recognize each other. However, this merely underscores the fact that there is no simple way out from imaginary space and time into 'reality'; just as the dizzying array of images is unified only by the refractive medium of the director's gaze, so also the point of the film is most of all the heightened sensitivity and attention that the spectator takes away from it. This is the limitation of the screen, and also its unique power and privilege.

fire

Photograph of Ivan (*Ivan's Childhood*).

4 Word and Image

The last line spoken in Andrei Tarkovsky's cinematic oeuvre cites the opening of St John's Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word.' Is this Tarkovsky's confession that he viewed his task more as telling than showing? Indeed, there is ample evidence of Tarkovsky's logocentrism. Of his seven full-length films, three were adaptations of literary works, two were based on previously published literary sources of his own composition, and one of the others is about a poet. His characters dilate at length on philosophical and ethical problems, reciting poems or Scripture, both on-screen and in voice-over. Even his use of well-known images from cultural tradition seems to confirm a mistrust of the cinematic image, as if it can be legitimated only by being grafted onto canonical cultural tradition in the most bookish sense. Indeed, these images are often motivated diegetically by having characters peruse art albums. If Tarkovsky's beginning was not the word, was it the book?

Tarkovsky's frequent citation of literary and visual artworks ostensibly contradicts his theory of film as a sovereign field of representation beyond the word and the painterly image. In 'Imprinted Time' Tarkovsky explicitly drew attention away from verbal discourse: 'One can't concentrate the meaning of a scene in the words that characters utter. [. . .] Only by precisely coordinating the action with the pronounced word, only from their different trajectories is born the image I call an "image-observation", an absolutely concrete image' (*ST* 75; *ZV* 178). In a 1985 interview he declared:

> for me as a cinema artist the word is just the same kind of material as anything else. [. . .] As far as words in general are concerned then, despite some perhaps very serious pronouncements by my

> protagonists, I view these words and statements more as underscoring and expressing their character than as expressing an authorial point of view. [. . .] art in general – and cinema especially – is expressed not by means of words but by means of feelings which the author invests in his works.

'In general', Tarkovsky concluded, 'I view words as noise made by man.'[1]

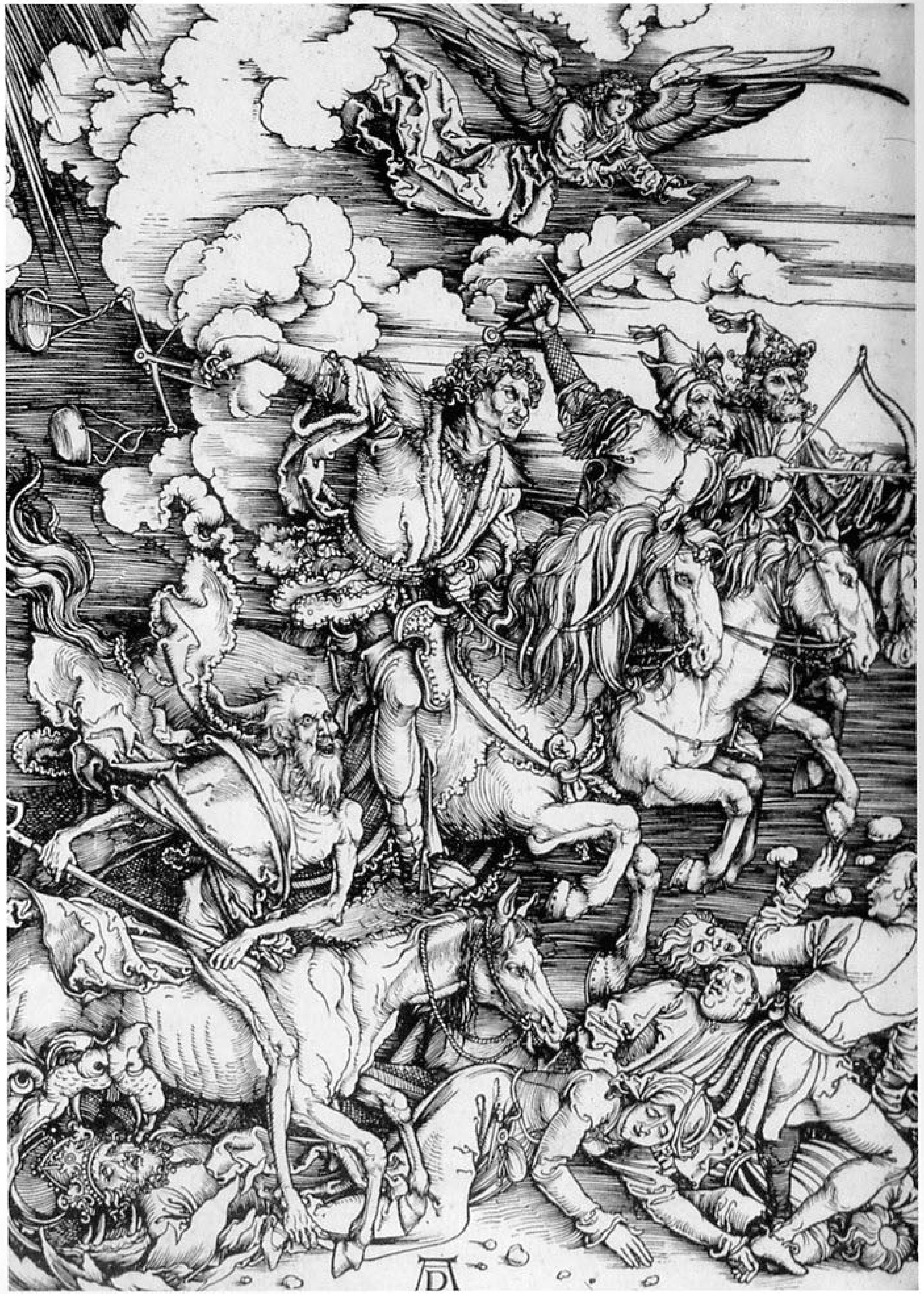
When the word can be defined as both a spiritual element and mere noise, there is an obvious need to get beyond the logic of either/or. In fact, the cinema might even be defined in terms of its ability precisely to render the image as a word and the word as an image, and in this way to heighten the fragile materiality of mediation. This tension in Tarkovsky's discourse on language and art is graphically displayed in scenes where books and images are torn, burnt, soaked or otherwise obscured. His filmic narratives *incinerate* texts and images in order to *form* an original world out of their ashes; moreover, this world is never entirely present on-screen. Tarkovsky understands that his film will also be burnt up in the viewer's appropriation. Therefore the scenes of burnt books and desecrated images are emblematic of Tarkovsky's broad interest in how images interact with material life to create the specific density of lived existence. I attach particular importance to Tarkovsky's use of both handmade and mechanically reproduced media, both original and copy. As is most starkly suggested by Hari in *Solaris*, the copy is a condition of the original's rejuvenation.

Tarkovsky's cinematic attitude towards books and paintings was manifested as early as *Ivan's Childhood*: the fresco of the *Mother of God*, invisible to the characters in the film, is seen only by the observant eye of the camera, which also marks out the crosses formed by the tail of a crashed aeroplane as a sanctifying ruin and as the tomb of meaning. These are the only traces of human endeavour above ground; the destruction of all other human creations allows the desecrated earth to be cleansed of its effluvia and restored to a pristine state of basic (and holy) elements: earth, water, wind and fire. Yet the visual force of the fresco vis-à-vis the viewer is only strengthened by its desolation. The image survives not as a manufactured artefact, but as a pattern embedded in nature and revealed in apocalyptic cleansing.

At first glance, the printed book and language as such seem utterly de-functionalized. Language no longer works for communication. Ivan writes his letter in a secret code using quantities of seeds and thorns instead of words. Language is desecrated on the misspelt sign that the enemy has hung around the neck of two fallen comrades; to Kholin's disgust, however, Galtsev fails to remove the sign or the bodies. Ivan says that Germans cannot have any writers because he saw a public burning of books in a German city; but then in the circumstances of war the Russians do not have too many books around either, only some magazines that Galtsev recommends to Ivan for their pictures. The written word is good only for a desperate epitaph that teenage Russian soldiers facing execution have scrawled on the wall of the bunker. The camera is constantly attracted to this graffiti, but it remains as helpless as the bunker's present inhabitants to respond to it in any meaningful way.

Ivan's letter (*Ivan's Childhood*).

It is notable that, amidst the general collapse of image and language, the two instances of effective communication involve media of mechanical reproduction. Katasonych fixes the gramophone (probably a war trophy) and comes up with a record of the Russian baritone Fëdor Shaliapin. Shaliapin's voice remains mute until the gramophone is repaired, but the first time it is played the music is immediately shut off by Kholin without explanation, while the second time the needle gets stuck in a groove.



Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1498).

Possibly, the voice is too powerful to be activated at this moment; it must remain a latent presence, etched into the grooves of vinyl. Even more curious is the fact that, while waiting for his new mission, Ivan rejects the illustrated magazines (he says he has read them all) before picking up an album of Albrecht Dürer's prints that had also been captured from the Germans. Dürer's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* immediately captivates Ivan; he recognizes the skeletal figures as the very same 'Fritzes' on motorcycles who had raided his village and killed his mother. Johnson and Petrie claim the picture 'is used to intensify the horrors of war [. . .] and to provide an outlet for the anti-Nazi sentiments'.[2] However, why Dürer, and why this engraving?

From the perspective of Russian aesthetic tradition, specifically the aesthetics of Pavel Florensky (1882–1937), Dürer's engravings were symptomatic of the spiritual crisis of modernity. Viewing the artistic composition and technique as expressions of artists' 'metaphysics', Florensky took as his ideal the fifteenth-century Russian icon, for instance Andrei Rublëv's *Trinity*.[3] The complex technique of preparing wooden panels, tracing the canonical composition and layering colour onto its forms, background and faces is filled with symbolic profundity. In sum, 'the icon-painter depicts *being*, moreover *well-being* [*blagobytie*]'.[4] The engraving, by contrast, typifies Protestant spirituality in its rejection of corporeal sensuousness and its rational de-composition of objects into conceptual outlines: 'The engraving is a schema of the image, constructed on the sole basis of the laws of logic [. . .] deprived of both spiritual and sensuous givenness'. Moreover, the engraving is a 'mechanically reproducible work', a cliché that can be imprinted on any surface.[5] Florensky likens this indifference to Kant's philosophical method, which 'reconstructs the activity of form-creation' and therefore 'is freely accepted by any surface'.[6] For Florensky, photography (and, by implication, the cinema) marked a further step in the direction of abstract, soulless and mechanical representation.[7]

Yet Dürer's print also serves as an index of the expressive potential of the cinematic image, which is not a full depiction of reality, rather a mechanical imprint of its outline. In *Ivan's Childhood*, Dürer's engraving allows Ivan the freedom to trace his own reality within its frame, and it endows his traumatic reality with the apocalyptic meaning of the image. In a similar fashion, Tarkovsky's cinematic image provides a shape and a directionality for the viewer's reality without imposing a strict narrative or ideological content. The viewer animates the cinematic image by emplotting it within a meaningful narrative framework. Just as the print is an imprinted shape, so for Tarkovsky the celluloid image is imprinted time.

However, an engraving or a film is not simply a mechanically reproduced image that requires emplotment; it is also a material artefact that intervenes in material existence. The Dürer book is a tattered war trophy that is immediately discarded when read. Quite different is the photograph and dossier on Ivan that Galtsev finds in bombed-out Berlin; this material trace, preserved in the midst of the burnt city, is informed by the entire preceding narrative. We can try to view this photograph just as Ivan viewed the Dürer engraving, as a visual tracing of the narrative we have just experienced. Yet it resists being sublimated in this way; the narrative has culminated in an image that coincides with life and becomes, for the viewer, a memory.

Regarding his next film *Andrei Rublëv* (1969), Tarkovsky once noted that 'For us the story of Rublëv's life is essentially the story of a *taught* or imposed concept that burns up in the atmosphere of living truth to arise again from the ashes as a fresh and newly discovered truth' (*ST* 89; *ZV* 195). Indeed, *Andrei Rublëv* provides memorable images of burnt books and charred icons, which according to Tarkovsky must 'rise again' from the ashes of the film. The inscribed image and the written word are obviously central to *Andrei Rublëv*, a film about icon-painters that in its episodic structure can be likened to the illuminated manuscript of a monastic chronicle. Many of the major characters have peculiar relationships to books. For instance, Daniil is often shown with books but he rarely reads them. In episode 1 ('The Jester') he nods off to sleep in his reading. In episode 2 ('Theophanes the Greek') he feigns reading the book to avoid talking to Andrei. Others show bookishness to be a dubious virtue. In episode 4 ('The Last Judgement') Foma is seen with an open volume of icon tracings, as he waits to begin the frescoes in Vladimir; the book contributes to his (misplaced) confidence that he is qualified to begin working independently of Andrei. In the same scene, Daniil instructs the young Sergei to calm Andrei by reading from the New Testament; the passage from St Paul actually irritates Andrei even further because it painfully contradicts observed reality. Kirill's interaction with books is even more negative. He cites written authorities in his conversation with Theophanes the Greek and, for his sins, is later told to copy out the scriptures fifteen times. As is made clear in his final conversation with Andrei, this penance does Kirill little good. Copying is not the same as understanding.

The burnt book (*Andrei Rublëv*).

Most emblematic of the book in *Andrei Rublëv* is Theophanes' appearance from beyond the grave in episode 5 ('The Raid'). At first the viewer sees only an unknown hand leafing through a charred volume. In the course of the ensuing conversation Theophanes surprises himself by speaking lines from the New Testament, exclaiming 'I remember! I haven't forgotten!' The book is unnecessary in heaven, where God communicates without verbal mediation, though it remains dear to Theophanes, perhaps as the medium through which he encountered God, however darkly, in the world. Theophanes deals with images in a similar way. He nonchalantly dismisses Andrei's grief over his burnt iconostasis: 'Do you know how many iconostases I have had burnt?' he asks. Answering Andrei's question about heaven, he says: 'It doesn't look at all as you imagine it.' However, after calling into question the accuracy of the icon, Theophanes adds: 'Still, it's all so beautiful!' Theophanes demotes the icon to an approximation of the truth that, far from 'expressing' transcendent reality, imprints it as a tracing of an outline. At first Andrei takes this entire experience as a denial of the word and the image, and he responds by disavowing speech and icon-painting. But at this point *Andrei Rublëv* becomes a film about the resurrection of the word and image through Andrei's purgative silence. He must rediscover the burnt word and image as imprints of a spiritual shape, and not as transcendent reality itself, and he must embody that spiritual shape in his actions, which are more durable than words and images.

The rediscovery of the icon as an imprinting of heaven concludes an intense discourse on images in *Andrei Rublëv*. The film is full of icons. They are propped against walls in Theophanes' and Kirill's workshops. When Foma imagines the Crucifixion scene, he stocks it with winged angels, melodramatic mourners and Bruegel-like landscapes.

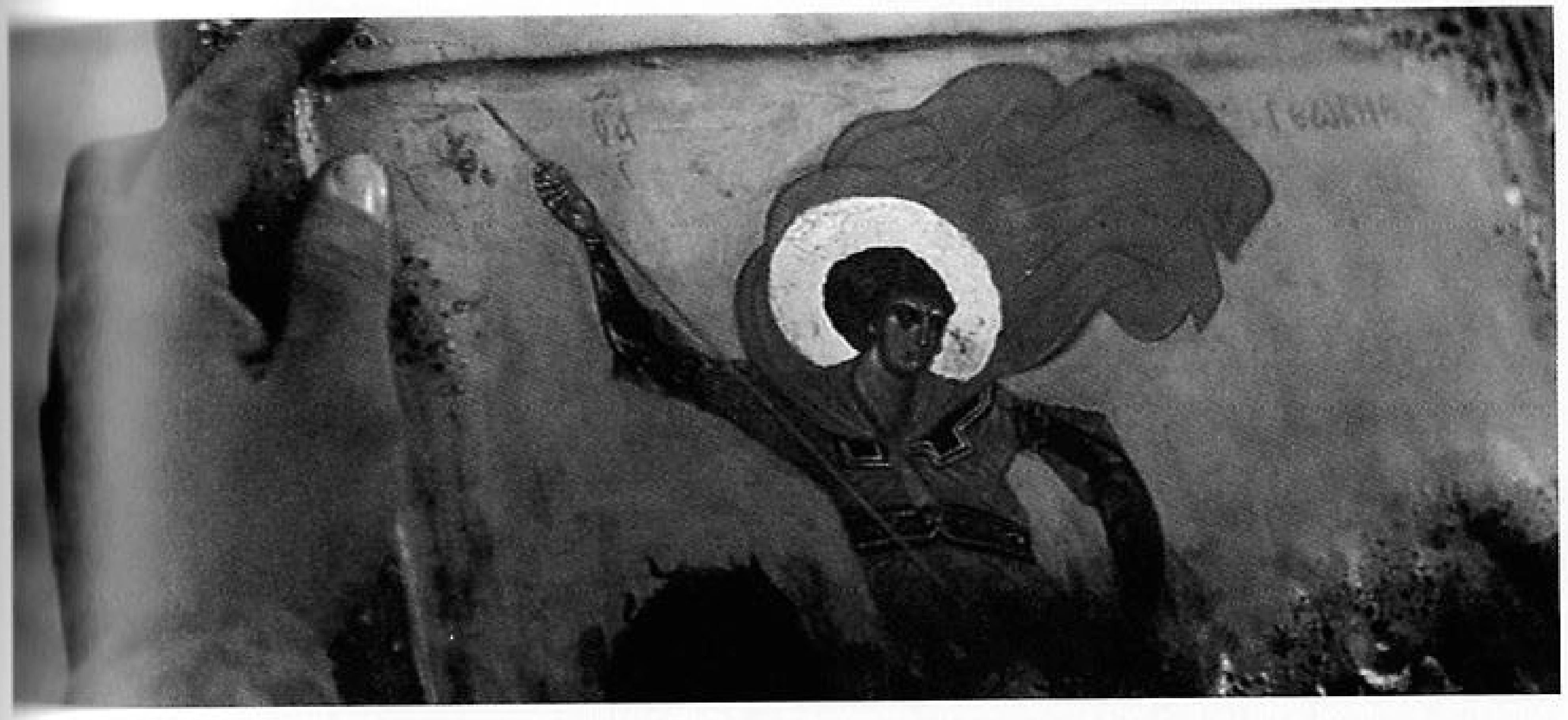
But Foma is a minor artist, one who takes inspiration from books of canonical models. Kirill's bookishness does not completely obscure his vision. When he returns to the monastery after years of wandering the world (episode 6, 'Charity'), he notices the shadows of people and beasts upside-down on the wall opposite a boarded-up window. He seems to discover for himself the secret of representing life in a *camera obscura*. But Kirill is also a failed artist. Andrei, the real painter, has no such epiphanies of visual imagination and technology; he merely sees.

Only once is Andrei shown handling an icon. It depicts St George killing the dragon and has been singed by a fire in the Grand Prince's palace. The Grand Prince glances at the icon just after he sends Stepan out to blind the stonemasons, as if to acknowledge the diabolical similarity between St George's spiritual labour and his own treacherous crime. Like Dürer's *Four Horsemen* in *Ivan's Childhood*, the desecrated icon of St George is revealed as a pattern for the apocalypse, from which humanity's cruel overlords trace their actions. However, the end of the film denotes a stark reversal of this iconoclastic theme. Boriska stamps St George's killing of the dragon onto his triumphal bell; we first see the relief of St George when the burnt cast is chipped away. The Grand Prince arrives and contemplates the raising of the bell. Boriska's violent firing and smashing of the cast renews the image itself. As with the burnt icons in Vladimir, the image must be incinerated in order to be imprinted as a tracing of eternal truth.

The epilogue to *Andrei Rublëv* would seem to confirm this paradoxical icon-veneration by displaying the icons with a mobile camera and sprinkling them with water. Narrative film authenticates images by informing them with material content; yet these images do not coincide with life. The cinema is a narrative in which word and image suspend the temporal progression only to be suspended themselves by the forward thrust of suspense. There can be no final word or still image.

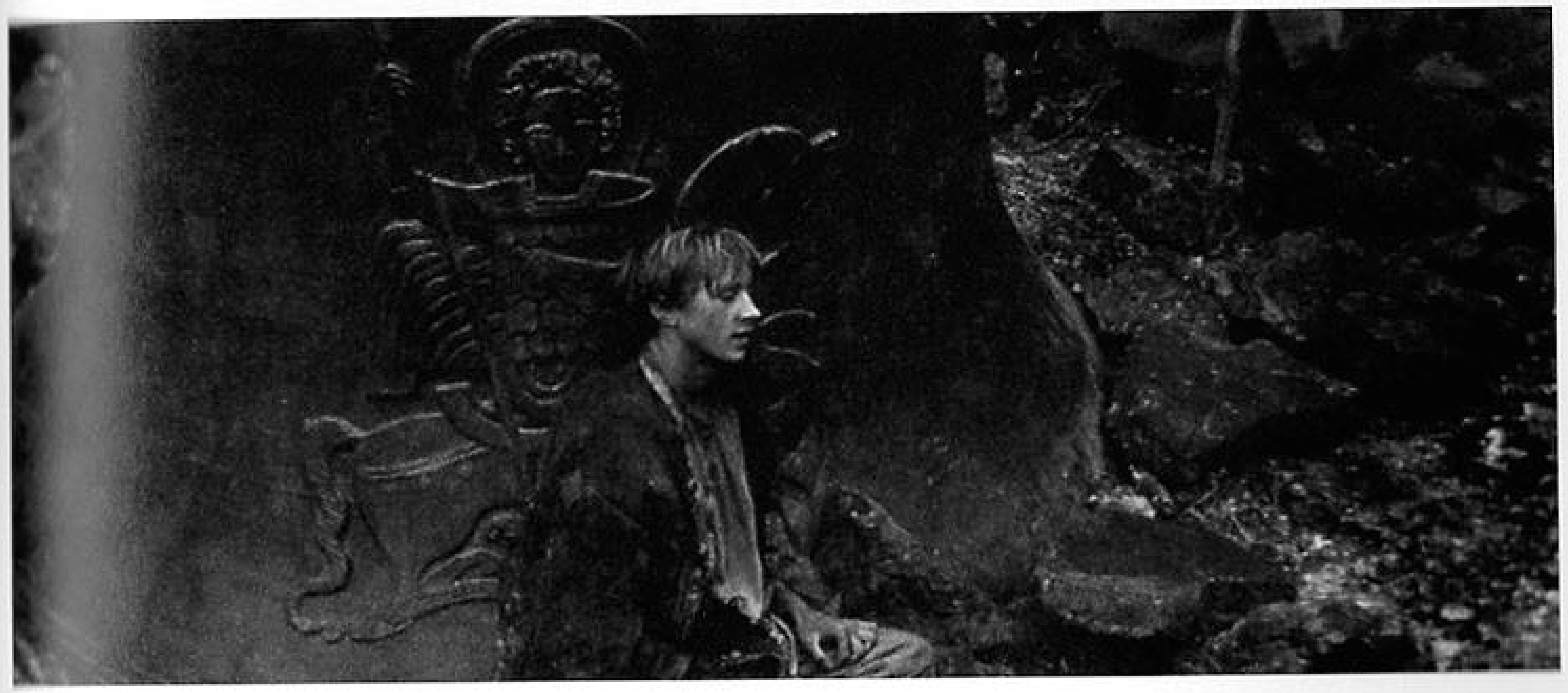
The most conspicuous thing about language in *Andrei Rublëv* is its inconspicuousness. The film treats of a distant historical and cultural epoch (fifteenth-century Muscovite Rus), a distant linguistic milieu (icon-painters in the Russian Orthodox Church) and several non-Russian nationalities (one Greek, a couple of Italians and the Tatar-Mongol horde). However, the film is dominated by a kind of neutral-modern Russian (albeit with a folksy tinge) that avoids foreign loan-words just as studiously as archaic forms. Four levels of language can be identified in the film. First, there is the Russian language spoken by the characters to each other in the film's diegesis. Second, there are three extensive quotations from Scripture, read mostly as voice-overs. Third, there are two groups of foreign characters who speak their own languages, which are presumably not understood by the Russian characters and are not translated for the Russian viewer (although their speech is sometimes translated in subtitled versions). Lastly, as already noted, language appears several times in the form of written texts.

In contemporary interviews Tarkovsky consistently spoke of the need to avoid stylizing the narrative according to current ideas of what medieval Russia should look and feel like. Instead, he sought to render



The icon of St George (*Andrei Rublëv*).

St George on bell (*Andrei Rublëv*).



the setting sparsely, with the effect of underscoring its material presence on-screen and making it seem inhabitable: 'A chair must be seen not as an artefact in a museum, but as an object on which people sit.'[8] A similar stricture applied to the actors, who, Tarkovsky stipulated, 'will play people they understand, subject to essentially the same feelings as contemporary man'.[9] This need for immediacy resulted in a neutral and transparent language. Tarkovsky's colleagues were sympathetic with this conception. At the very first Artistic Council meeting on *Andrei Rublëv*, on 28 April 1963, the screenplay was praised for its 'rich, colourful, juicy' language 'without modernization and without returning to the language of the fourteenth [*sic*] century'.[10]

This is true even for the extensive quotations of Scripture in episode 2 ('Theophanes the Greek'), when the text of Ecclesiastes (in voice-over) accompanies Kirill's silent contemplation of his position, and episode 4 ('The Last Judgement'), when Andrei and the youth Sergei both read sections of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. All three texts are read following the standard Russian translation, completed in 1876. The use of this text in the film is technically anachronistic, insofar as it postdates Rublëv's life by almost 500 years and pre-dates the film by almost a century, and also anatopic, insofar as it is still not used for ecclesiastic purposes in the Russian Church. (To monks and other ecclesiastics, the Slavonic text continues to be current and more familiar.) By using this translation, Tarkovsky brings the text to the viewer, but also alienates it from its native habitat. This is a defamiliarizing familiarity, which forces the viewer to re-calibrate the proper distance to the representation and to ask 'are these the right words?'

The second Scriptural text in episode 4 is read at random by the youth Sergei who trips over the complex grammar and unfamiliar words. His poor performance of the text serves not to 'ridicule' it, as Solzhenitsyn has claimed;[11] rather, Sergei's reading reinforces the point that, in adulthood, a childish understanding and a childish language cede not to a fluency of understanding and language, but to an appreciation of the failure of language before the enormity of the truths that it denotes. Reading the rules of church conduct brings the characters closer to God by dramatizing their distance from true understanding. Rublëv realizes that, void of love, his words are merely 'sounding brass'. Removing Scripture from its usual pragmatic context, the child's voice does not render it transparent, rather it reveals it (and all language) as an opaque medium that both joins us to and separates us from knowledge.

The two instances of foreign speech reinforce this idea of language as at once a barrier and an almost impossible aspiration. In the first instance, Tatar-Mongol marauders descend upon Andronikov Monastery during Rublëv's ordeal of silence. He watches mutely as they tease the holy fool with a chunk of horsemeat and then carry her off. Throughout this scene the rough beauty of their Turkic speech is front and centre. To a Russian ear perhaps some of the exclamations are even vaguely comprehensible, such as 'yakshy' ('good'), 'ki bashka' ('put [the helmet] on your head') and 'ayda' ('let's go'). One knowledgeable source on Turkic languages has tentatively identified the speech here as a dialect of Kipchak, possibly Nogai, which preserves archaic features of an earlier, more unified state of the Turkic languages.[12] Whether he was aware of it or not, Tarkovsky succeeded in creating a language that, true to the general tendency of the film, refrains from projecting a specific time or place, and which instead invites multiple inhabitations.

The untranslated Turkic speech also confirms Tarkovsky's studied avoidance of any definitive interpretation of the narrative. The holy fool who is carried off in this scene appears to return at the very end of the film as a Tatar princess. The film gives little grounds for confidence in this matter. It is not unknown for actors to play multiple roles in Tarkovsky's films; in *Andrei Rublëv*, Iurii Nazarov plays both the elder and younger princes, while Nikolai Glazkov appears as three distinct characters. The screenplay appears to fill in the gap by showing the holy fool regain her sanity after giving birth to a Tatar-looking child; however, the screenplay lacks both the scene of her abduction by the Tatars and her reappearance at the end of the film.[13] The mystery of the holy fool deepens if one understands the Tatars to say, as they carry her off, 'Let's take her with us and abandon her on the road.' Perhaps this statement is not supposed to be understood, but its mystifying effect reflects a significant fact about the film: the more one investigates the evident discontinuities within the plot, the more one uncovers the consistent pursuit of discontinuity as an aesthetic principle. Sparseness and even absence are revealed as indexes of a superabundance of meaning that simply cannot be represented on the screen, which becomes more expressive as it becomes gradually less transparent. Far from imposing an interpretation on the fragmented narrative, the voice-overs and untranslated speech of the Tatar-Mongols confirm how far the film must be even from understanding itself.

The untranslated speech of the Italian diplomats in 'The Bell' is mere chatter, soon drowned out by the proverbial 'sounding brass' of Boriska's bell. The triumph of 'The Bell' restores both the image and the word to their sovereign functions. Almost alone among the major characters of the film, Boriska speaks with effect: when he invokes the name of his father to have Andreika whipped, Andreika is led away; when he demands more silver from the Grand Prince, he gets it. When Boriska confesses to Andrei, he elicits the monk's first words for sixteen years. It is said that Anatolii Solonitsyn, the actor who played Andrei, refrained from speaking for an entire month prior to shooting the final scene in order, as Tarkovsky said, 'to find the right intonation for a man who speaks after a long silence'.[14] Rublëv is able to speak once again, not because he has learnt the right words, but rather because he has re-learnt the language of children and has reconciled himself to its inevitable but noble failure. Andrei's words are not self-sufficient; they convey the monk's intention to resume painting and to encourage Boriska's bell-founding. These words are both the 'beginning' of the deed and merely a 'noise' that humans make, both transparent medium and opaque film.

The story of Solonitsyn's vow of silence seems dubious given the fact that, following Soviet practice, dialogue was recorded at the end of the shoot and dubbed into the film; perhaps Tarkovsky felt that speaking after a long silence affects not only the voice, but also the gesture of speaking. In his following films Tarkovsky appears to have placed even less importance on voice and language. In *Solaris*, he went out of his way to engage two actors, Donatas Banionis and Juri Jarvet, who spoke Russian with strong Baltic accents. The actors who provide their voices, Vladimir Zamansky and Vladimir Tatosov, were not even listed in the credits. Moreover, Jarvet's grasp of Russian was so poor that Tarkovsky later regretted that he had not let him read the lines in his native Estonian: 'it was anyway necessary to dub his voice and he could be even freer and therefore more distinct, richer in colour, had he pronounced the text of the role in Estonian' (*ST* 148; *ZV* 266). (True, he failed to act on this observation; in *Nostalghia* he still had Erland Josephson mouth his lines in Italian.) It is puzzling that the only character with a plausibly Soviet name, the Armenian Gibarian, is the only one to speak Russian with an accent – and he does so only in recordings.

In *Mirror*, a confessional film, one might expect a greater emphasis on speech; however, the film is much more concerned with the muteness of real experience, in which 'only rarely and for brief moments can you see the full coincidence of word and gesture, word and action, word and meaning' (*ST* 75; *ZV* 178). The prologue, which shows the stutterer cured, is a cipher of the film's struggle to master its own discourse. The boy's new-found fluency is at once confirmed and suspended in the Bach prelude (*Das Orgelbüchlein no. 16, 'Das alte Jahr vergangen ist'*) which accompanies the opening credits. The fluid musicality of speech is confirmed in the first-person retrospective voice-over, which is read by Innokentii Smoktunovsky. Having taken flight, language has its wings clipped in the halting conversation between the mother and the cynical doctor. Thus language wavers between muteness and eloquence, which underscores its status as an opaque medium.

The performance of language eschews simple communication for the manifold of human experience. When the mother wanders through her house in a reverie of memory, the voice of Arsenii Tarkovsky begins to read (in voice-over) a poem: 'Each instant of our meetings / We celebrated like a theophany'. As the voice-over intones the words 'mirror glass', the mother looks out the window. As the voice reads that 'speech swelled in my throat', the mother picks up a notebook, as if to seek the handwritten text that can mediate between the full-sounding voice and the memory of its author, the father who has not returned from the war. In his absence, the text occupies a physical locus at an imaginary point of convergence between the father's voice, his notebook of poems, the mother's memory, her reading of the notebook and, now, the narrative of the film. A similar conclusion can be made regarding the temporal moment recorded in the poem. Although this scene is set immediately after World War II, the poem is dated 1962; it is being read for a film made in 1974, and now is being viewed at a completely new time and place. By imprinting multiple layers of time and place, the text overloads the sensorium and blocks any attempt to reduce the experience to a verbal interpretation; the text becomes the guarantor of materiality.

Other instances of books and texts reveal an equally ambivalent attitude towards the possibility of specifying any meaning. When the protagonist's mother tells him of the death of her former colleague at a printing plant, we see his imagined memory of an incident in her career as proof-reader. She runs to the printing plant in the pouring rain to check a horrible misprint she may have let through. Although the book has already been printed, it becomes clear that she must have imagined the misprint. Switching to the present, young Ignat is joined at home by an unidentified older woman who instructs him to read from a manuscript book (a journal or diary). He reads Pushkin's letter to Petr Chaadaev, written in answer to Chaadaev's as yet unpublished 'First

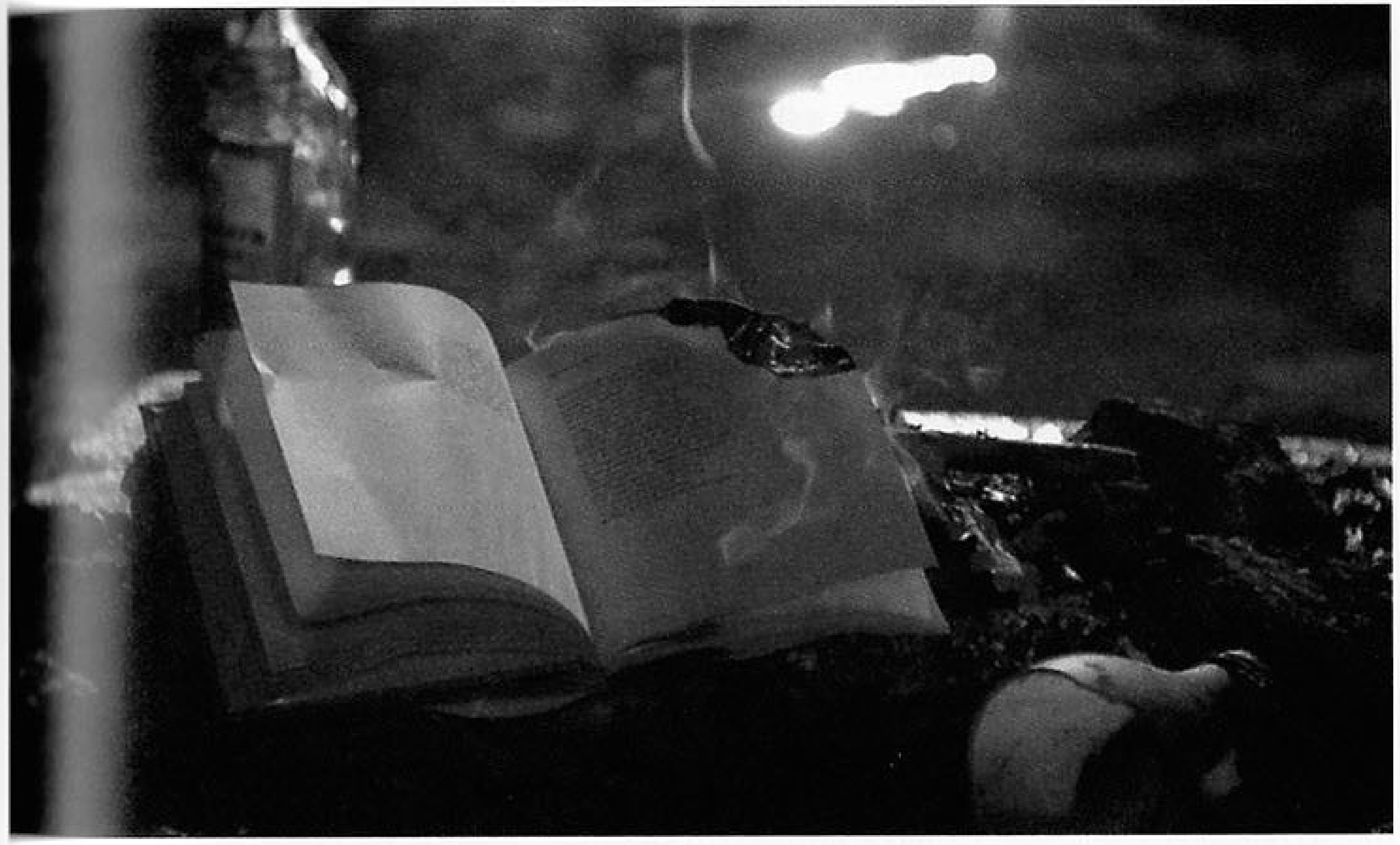
Philosophical Letter'. In this case, a manuscript exchange between authors, which has long since been committed to print, is copied out by hand and read out loud. At the end of the film, the hero is shown as a child turning the pages of an old book about Leonardo; he lifts up a tissue-paper divider to reveal a plate, and then we cringe as he roughly turns more pages, creasing and ripping the divider. The film manifests an obsessive need to appropriate books and words into one's own experience; otherwise words are spectral vestiges of elusive beings who, like the father and like Stalin, never enter into human community or who, like Ignat's mysterious visitor, dissolve into the very air.

The original working title of *Mirror* was 'White Day', taken from another of Arsenii Tarkovsky's poems:

> It's impossible to return there
> And impossible to narrate,
> How overfilled with bliss
>
> Was this heavenly garden.[15]

If this poem contains the initial idea of *Mirror*, then it is notable that it is not cited in the film. The impossibility of returning to the original experience is both posed and resolved by the film in its complex layering of visual and auditory registers from distinct places and times. These magically give a sense of the fullness of the experience that remains, unspoken and unseen, at the heart of the film – in its encounter with a viewer.

While Tarkovsky used his father's poetry in three consecutive films, the figure of the poet is completely withheld from view. Only in *Nostalghia*, Tarkovsky's first foreign-language film, is there a poet amongst the characters – and even then Gorchakov (originally conceived as an architect) only reads other people's texts. In *Nostalghia* the dichotomy of foreign vs native speech takes flesh in the person of Eugenia, Gorchakov's attractive interpreter. She shows him a book of Tarkovsky's poetry in Italian translation, prompting Gorchakov to voice doubts concerning the possibility of translating poetry. It would be a mistake to regard this view as the author's own. In *Time of Travel* the same thought is expressed by Tonino Guerra, with whom Tarkovsky collaborated on the screenplay of *Nostalghia*, as he proceeds to translate his own poem from dialect into standard Italian, eliciting from Tarkovsky a grateful 'Bene'.



The book and the flame (*Nostalghia*).

Indeed, Gorchakov subsequently sets fire to a book of Arsenii Tarkovsky's poems, while a voice-over reads the lines:

> And this page will tell you
> How to cry and what to treasure,
> How to give away the last third
> Of merriment and to die easily,
> And in the shade of a random shelter
>
> To catch on fire after death like a word.[16]

Tarkovsky's characters are unable to find shelter in language as a social body or as a historical text; to a significant degree, they are left – like the mute Andrei Rublëv before the alien marauders – with language as a form of alien music. If this language is a medium of exchange, it is one that can never be cashed in, either by the characters or by the viewer. Language is part of a complex aural landscape, which is filled with discontinuities that are both failures of and possibilities for meaning. As Andrea Truppin has noted regarding Tarkovsky's last three films, 'the use of ambiguous sound plunges the audience into a never fully resolved struggle to believe in the diegesis, much as the films' characters struggle with their own ability to have faith.'[17]

Many viewers encounter Tarkovsky's films via subtitles. Describing a screening of the film in America, Solzhenitsyn lamented that 'its living language, even with a moderate stressing of "o" characteristic of the Vladimir accent (and in part with a typically Soviet harshness of conversation) was replaced by sparse, imprecise and anachronistic, inexpressive English subtitles'.[18] But then the material presence of an obviously inadequate text on-screen, with half of the titles invisible against the snow, might prove to be the epitome of Tarkovsky's discourse on language.

5 Story

We often regard stories – especially those of the cinema – as discrete messages to be received and registered, meaningful in their own right and transparent in their meaning. If that is the case, then it must be admitted that we usually prefer to hear stories that merely confirm what we already know: that couples couple, the good prevail and grief is overcome. In some postmodern cinema, even of the most popular kind, these kinds of stories are complicated and even thwarted, without necessarily yielding any positive alternative: stories have simply ceased to be meaningful, meaning to be retrievable. Tarkovsky's storytelling is neither the reiteration nor the rejection of standard plots; it is their radical suspension and analysis. Just as his films place human dwellings precariously within the ceaseless flow, Tarkovsky's stories plot out a field of vision, a visual atmosphere, within which the fragile flame of potentiality is glimpsed. Tarkovsky once rated *Nostalghia* as his favourite among his films precisely because 'it is so far the only one of my films in which the screenplay is free of any independent significance'.[1] There is indeed little point to reading a Tarkovsky screenplay, no more than in listening to a Tarkovsky soundtrack, outside the finished films; their information value is nullified outside their performance, for which they are merely conditions.

Tarkovsky once said that 'entertainment in the cinema [. . .] degrades both sides – both the authors and the spectators' (MJ 427); however, the facts show that he was not an implacable opponent of heavily plotted film. After all, he wrote the screenplay for the very average detective story *Beware, Snakes!* and served as co-screenwriter and artistic director for the run-of-the-mill World War II spy film *One Chance in a Thousand*. True, he criticized genre films as 'commercial enterprises', 'intended to compulsion to remain faithful to the screenplay, declaring that 'the more detailed the screenplay, the worse the picture' (UR 16). He singled out the examples of Jean-Luc Godard, whose film *Vivre sa vie* (1962) was based on a single-page screenplay with improvised dialogue, and of John Cassavetes, whose *Shadows* (1959) was composed into a narrative after improvised scenes had already been shot. Tarkovsky came closest to this model in *Mirror*, the project proposal for which (under the title 'Confession') made provision for an interview with Tarkovsky's mother, shot with a hidden camera; the improvisatory element ran against the grain of the usual process, but was approved (ST 132). 'For the first time', Tarkovsky said,

> I am trying not to adapt a plot for the screen [. . .] but to make my own memory, my worldview, my understanding or misunderstanding of something, my state of mind, the subject of a film. In fact the film is to become nothing other than the process of my conception's maturation [OS 98].

It was only in February 1974, after several months of shooting the film (by now re-titled 'White Day'), that Tarkovsky decided to replace the interview with new scenes featuring Margarita Terekhova as the wife of the protagonist (MJ 341). At the same time he shifted the centre of the film from the mother to the first-person protagonist, and changed its title to *Mirror*, citing the proliferation of recent films with the word 'white'.[7] Even then, the precise narrative sequence was worked out only at the editing table; Tarkovsky allegedly sewed twenty pockets onto a sheet, wrote out the sequences on index cards, and over the course of a month literally shuffled the sequences as in a game of patience until they lay right;[8] several distinct variants were viewed and discussed by the studio between April and July 1974. Throughout the official discussions of *Mirror* Tarkovsky's attitude was one of 'trust me': 'Artists are denied the right to experiment ("Production!" "Money!"). [. . .] There are things that I can't explain right now, but they are clear to me and I have an inner conviction that what I am doing cannot fail.'[9]

Still, subsequent to *Mirror* Tarkovsky reverted to a detailed screenplay that he used as a more or less rough outline of the finished product. If a screenplay must be used, Tarkovsky claimed, it will work only if 'in the process of work the screenwriter's and director's original designs are broken and crushed and on their "ruins" arises a new conception, a new organism' (UR 18; ST 76; ZV 178). This was certainly the case in *Stalker*, in which, at the end of nine distinct drafts, the 'entire plot of the Zone remain[s] off-screen'.[10] True, there were practical reasons for a maximally expansive screenplay; Tarkovsky once suggested that the screenplay of *Stalker* had been intentionally padded to secure a higher rate of funding, which might have been jeopardized by his more ascetic plan (OS 246). At any rate, Tarkovsky's constant changes to his screenplays have created a voluminous documentation on their development, although the most important discrepancies – like the addition of the poems and of the closing scene of telekinesis in *Stalker* – usually seem to have been made silently, without any explanation.

This was a potential problem with the authorities at the studio and at Goskino, who saw fidelity to the approved screenplay as a lever of control on directors, and later with Western producers, who needed some concrete basis on which to provide funding. When asked why Soviet filmmakers displayed such a preference for adaptations of literary works, Tarkovsky bluntly answered: 'Because they don't have their own ideas'.[11] Yet three of his films were based on well-known literary sources, and his lists of future projects regularly featured several more such projects, especially *Hamlet* and the novels of Dostoevsky and Thomas Mann. One cannot judge films that were never made, and there is every reason to believe that, had these projects materialized, they would have surprised us. Reflecting on *Stalker*, Tarkovsky declared that the 'meaning of any film adaptation is not to illustrate a famous work, but rather to create a new work of cinema *apropos of* it'.[12] 'The better the writer, the more impossible it is to adapt him', Tarkovsky concluded in his lectures (UR 19). To use Dostoevsky, Tarkovsky remarked in his proposal for *The Idiot*, 'is tantamount to clay passing through the heat of an oven, where it can either attain form – both fire-resistant and waterproof – or melt up and turn into something formless and petrified'.[13] More concretely, Tarkovsky speculated that he 'would turn into action the content of Dostoevsky's surprisingly profound authorial asides (*remarki*); they are practically the most important thing and bear the weight of the entire idea'.[14]

With respect to *Hamlet*, by contrast, Tarkovsky professed total servility to the text: 'insofar as he spoke of absolutely eternal problems, which are always of the essence, you can only produce *Hamlet* exactly as Shakespeare wanted'.[15] Any attempt to update it, Tarkovsky said, would be 'to pull it onto contemporary problems like a jacket that bursts at the seams; if it fails to burst, it just hangs formlessly, as if on a hanger'.[16] Perhaps this explains why Tarkovsky never filmed *Hamlet*, but only staged it in the theatre, or perhaps it indicates that Tarkovsky's own visualization of *Hamlet* was so complete that it had completely merged with the play in his mind, making it impossible to explain, let alone realize on screen.

Tarkovsky frequently spoke of the inevitable subjectivity of a director's adaptation of literary works. In literary prose, Tarkovsky wrote, 'the reader sees what he has been taught to see by his experience, character, interests and taste. The most detailed passages of prose leave the control of the writer, as it were, and are perceived by the reader subjectively.'[17] In the cinema, by contrast, the camera 'captures the action, the landscape and the characters' faces' in an 'unambiguous designation of concreteness, against which rebels the personal sensuous experience of the viewer as an individual'.[18] The only alternative for the director is to record his or her own visual experience of the narrative:

> I have noticed from my own experience that if the external emotional structure of images in a film rests on the author's memory, on the kinship between the impressions of one's own life and the fabric of the picture, then it is capable of exerting an emotional effect on the spectator.

In his comments on *Mirror* Tarkovsky would expand this argument to encompass not only the adaptations of literary works, but also original screenplays based on the authors' subjective memory and the entire social imaginary.

In his essays, interviews, lectures and (most importantly) films, Tarkovsky consistently held that the artist 'thinks in images and only thus is able to demonstrate his attitude towards life' (UR 22). He was never interested in the ideas with which he tagged his films for official and commercial consumption; one senses that he would have preferred not to speak about his films at all: 'When we deal with a genuine work of art, with a masterpiece, we deal with a "thing-in-itself", with an image that is no less incomprehensible than life itself' (UR 22). Like the physical setting of the film, the story provides a framework within which natural flows and human gazes cross and enter into interaction. It is, in short, the crucible in which the spectator will burn the film into experience (ST 89).

Tarkovsky's first feature film schooled him in managing the competing interests and purposes involved in the writing of a script. Faced with a ready screenplay, each detail of which would be passionately defended by its authors (Mikhail Papava and Vladimir Bogomolov, the author of the original story 'Ivan') and the studio authorities, Tarkovsky had little latitude with which to make the film his own, which he did mainly by adding four dreams and a sequence of newsreel footage, by redefining certain characters and by changing the title from *Ivan* into *Ivan's Childhood*. Tarkovsky was keen to resist the temptation of mitigating Ivan's death in any way; but he also desired to centre the story less on Ivan's scouting expeditions than on the tense 'pause' between them, full of the 'atmosphere of tense expectation'.[19] 'We saw the possibility of creating a newly truthful atmosphere of war with its over-tensed nervous condensation, invisible on the surface of events but palpable merely as a subterranean hum' (ST 17; ZV 109). Tarkovsky likens this tension to the image of the spring that Katasonych finds and uses to fix the gramophone, just in time for it to be used to mourn Katasonych's own death. Similarly, the film story is conceived as a machine for creating the ability to mourn, perhaps even for creating Dostoevskian characters like Ivan, 'externally static but inwardly tense with the energy of the passion that overcomes them' (ST 17; ZV 110). Tarkovsky insisted that the final dream (of Ivan playing war with other children) by no means 'lightened' the ending: 'The spectator looks upon a hero who is no longer alive and absorbs particles of his real and possible fate.'[20]

Tarkovsky's main concern was to replace Bogomolov's matter-of-fact manner with a 'poetic' visual style. Poetic cinema, at least for Tarkovsky as this time, meant 'exploding' the logical connections between events and examining their 'inward force', their 'associative connections' (ST 20; ZV 112-13). Considering the way human memory forms a composite image of a temporal experience, Tarkovsky adduces a characteristic spatial image: 'Against the background of the entire day this event looks like a tree in the fog' (ST 23; ZV 116). In particular Tarkovsky speaks of the need for the spatial composition – the *mise-en-scène* – to provide a contrast to the story-logic (ST 25). If it merely repeats the point of the action it builds an 'intellectual ceiling', against which the spectator knocks his head, instead of an infinite atmosphere.

The success of *Ivan's Childhood* emboldened Tarkovsky to try a radical experiment in poetic storytelling in the screenplay of *Andrei Rublëv*, co-written with Andron Konchalovsky. Moreover, Tarkovsky unapologetically described a difficult narrative: 'Arbitrarily breaking the narrative plot, we will strictly observe the poetic logic. We will try to combine apparently incomparable things. There is much poetry in this method. It allows us to speak in rich images of what is most important.'[21] It was conceived less as a story than as an extended pause before the demonstration of Rublëv's icons, expressive of 'the life of his spirit, the breath of the atmosphere that formed his attitude towards the world' (*ST* 34–5; *ZV* 129). The long, difficult production of the film confirmed Tarkovsky's belief in the need for the director constantly to rework the literary source. The story became the material basis for a study in visual registers.

This was increasingly a problem for Tarkovsky's bosses at the studio and at Goskino. Responding to one of the many lists of demands from his colleagues, this time to remove the scene of Kirill meditating in his cell, Tarkovsky remarked:

> Indeed nothing happens there. Kirill stakes his entire life and awaits Theophanes' invitation. He is exhausted; he is drawing a line ahead of time. Without this it's unclear (that is to say, plot-wise it's clear, but emotionally unjustified) why Kirill leaves in the next episode. Our picture will never become plot-based (*siuzhetnaia*). It won't be a Western, even if I discard another 300 metres of film.[22]

Nonetheless, the authorities eventually prevailed on Tarkovsky to re-edit the film in order to suggest causal relationships between loosely related shots and scenes.

Tarkovsky was so exhausted by the incessant conflict over *Andrei Rublev* that for his next film he chose the relatively safe route of adapting a popular science-fiction novel by a Soviet-bloc author. To be sure, Tarkovsky's proposal of 8 October 1968 began with an acknowledgement of the popularity of science fiction and the 'entertaining plot' of Lem's novel, 'tense, surprising, full of unexpected peripeteia and suspenseful collisions', and concluded with assurances of the film's commercial success.[23] In fact, Tarkovsky's interest in *Solaris* predated the major conflicts over *Andrei Rublev*, and he was clear in his public statements beginning in 1967 that he had no intention of satisfying viewer expectations with a genre film; indeed, he saw this as consistent with the novel's central collision of an 'encounter with the Unknown':

Kirill in his cell (*Andrei Rublëv*).

> For me there is no difference between a science-fiction, an historical and a contemporary film. If it is directed by an artist, then the problems that concern the director are the legacy of the current day, whatever time the plot might occur in. The most realistic plot is always invented, is always fantasy, while the ideas and thoughts of a true artist are always topical and current, they are always reality, whatever unlikely or supernatural form these ideas might take. After all true realism is not the copying of any particular circumstances of life, but the unfolding of phenomena, of their psychological or philosophical nature. [. . .] This is why I dream of screening Stanisław Lem's novel *Solaris*; I am attracted not by its entertaining and provocative plot, but by the profound philosophical idea of the knowability of the world, which is conveyed in a precise psychological conception. [. . .] I do not yet see the future film completely, but I would not like to make it an entertaining science-fiction or adventure film. It appears that I should have to reject the science-fiction trappings and call the spectator's attention to the psychology of a protagonist who has encountered his past. I am afraid that this is impossible, but ideally I imagine the action taking place in a single room with each character seeing his past – even if it's unappealing – as reality, and not as some dusty junk in a hold-all of memory. The task of such a film is to show people that even in everyday life it is necessary to think in a new way and not to settle with customary categories that have frozen into prejudices.[24]

Solaris, more than any other film, is precisely a study in authenticity in Tarkovsky's sense. It is doubtful whether any of Tarkovsky's characters are shown in their authentic 'being'. Certainly not Ivan or Galtsev, who are too young to be fully conscious; not Rublev, tortured by insecurities; not Kelvin or the Stalker, or Gorchakov or Domenico/Alexander. Only *Solaris* asks directly: who is this person with whom I share space? Kelvin has at some point in the past avoided this question, but remains trapped by it, unable any longer to escape through a hole in time and rid himself of an inconvenient body. He is a cosmic traveller who keeps stumbling over his untied shoelaces. So the film, also, was conceived as a flight into the cosmos that finds itself lashed to the earth – and as a film at war with its own story.

Tarkovsky's adaptation of Stanisław Lem's novel *Solaris* immediately became the central topic in critical responses to the film, even of subsequent responses to the novel as well. The controversy began when Lem travelled to Moscow in 1969 to advise the studio on Tarkovsky's screenplay (co-written with Fridrikh Gorenshtein); Lem did not approve of what he saw. Some of his complaints were relatively minor. He disagreed with the invention of a character, Maria, for whose sake Kris Kelvin had abandoned his wife, Hari, and to whom he would return, chastened and renewed, at the end of the film; after some argument Tarkovsky relinquished the character. More serious was Lem's consternation concerning the addition of an extended prologue on earth. Lem felt that the prologue on earth and the changes to Kelvin's character betrayed the 'point' of his novel: since in our cosmic wanderings we may be confronted with a fundamentally different kind of intelligence, we must pursue the open-minded but relentless exploration of the unknown. He later claimed that Tarkovsky 'did not make *Solaris*; what he made was *Crime and Punishment*'.[25]

If for Lem the unknown is elsewhere and in the future, for Tarkovsky the unknown is in the here and now. As Žižek comments,

> Communication with the Solaris-Thing [. . .] fails not because Solaris is too alien, the harbinger of an intellect infinitely surpassing our limited abilities, playing some perverse games with us whose rationale remains forever outside our grasp, but because it brings us too close to what in ourselves must remain at a distance if we are to sustain the consistency of our symbolic universe.[26]

However, to reduce the film to any 'point' whatsoever is to negate it as a narrative that is extended in time and perceived by the entire sensorium. The real conflict between Lem and Tarkovsky concerned less their contrasting philosophies than the very admissibility of such philosophical interpretations of a film. As an exasperated Tarkovsky said following a long discussion of the film by everyone from critics to cosmonauts, 'our film contains more than one idea by which its merits and shortcomings should be judged'.[27] If there is 'philosophy' in the film, he said, it is 'the impossibility of replaying what you once experienced in life. You would play it all again the same way.' His emphasis, as always, was not on this 'philosophy' but on the tangible and visual experience: for instance, by introducing earth, Tarkovsky explained, 'We wanted to see earth with a monotonous, as if numb gaze.'[28]

Another talking point about *Solaris* was its relationship to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), which was released in the build-up to Tarkovsky's shoot. Tarkovsky's stated response to Kubrick's film was purely negative; he called it 'a spectral sterile atmosphere, like a museum of technological achievements'.[29] The contrast helped Tarkovsky to formulate anew his distinct understanding of cinematic representation: 'Of course, the action of *Solaris* occurs in a unique and unfamiliar atmosphere', he explained. 'Our task is to concretize this uniqueness in its sensuous external features, so that it be material and tangible, without anything ephemeral, uncertain, special or intentionally fantastic; so that the screen manifests the "flesh" and the texture of the atmosphere (*sreda*).'[30] Kubrick's film, by contrast, was merely 'fake'.[31]

One might conclude from the controversy over the screenplay that Tarkovsky had wilfully distorted Lem's book, but the screenplay adheres surprisingly close to Lem's text. Many seemingly Tarkovskian features and details are taken directly from Lem's novel, including the strange illumination caused by the blue and red suns rising and setting, the way this light highlights the velvety fuzz on Hari's face, and even the paper strips on the ventilators, which replicate the familiar rustle of leaves on earth. These are precisely the kind of atmospheric details that Tarkovsky praised in the fictional work of his co-screenwriter Fridrikh Gorenshtein (ST 74). Their prominence in the novel – and Lem's own inconspicuous presentation of technological innovations – suggests that even Tarkovsky's preference for an earthy cosmos may have stemmed from his close reading of the book.

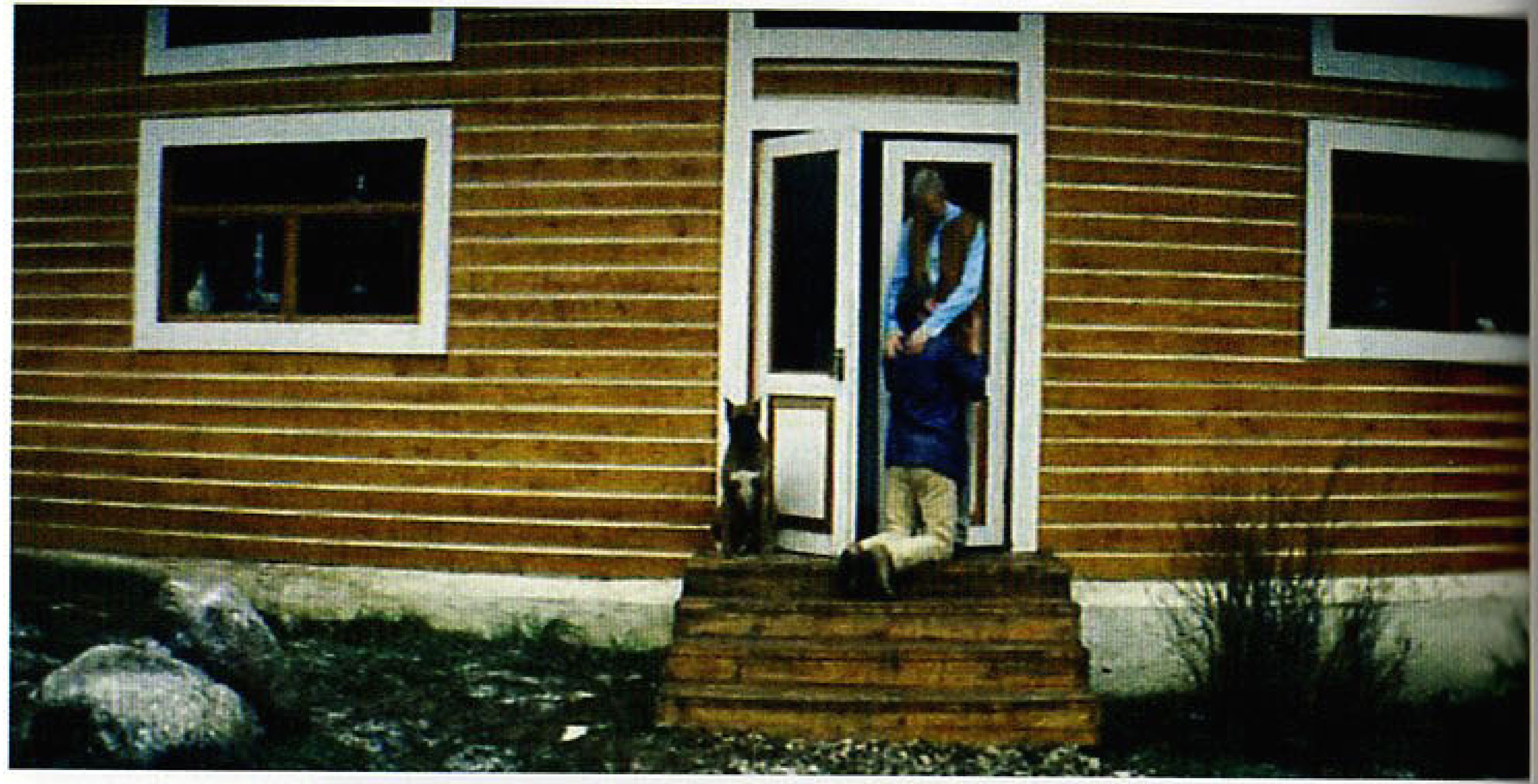
Tarkovsky was particularly interested in the way that the novel dramatized the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity that he had placed at the centre of his cinematic practice and theory. The Unknown that humans encounter is that of an alien flow that comes to life only in response to the human gaze. In the novel Kris is oppressed not only by the cognitive and logical puzzle, but also by the alien gaze he senses coming from the planet.[32] It is the gaze of a simulacrum that congeals into shapes without achieving material form. In all of these respects the novel *Solaris* provided a kind of negative exposure of the narrative of *Andrei Rublëv*. Instead of mute experience being transfigured into consummate images, here imperfect images force their agents to confront the very nature of experience and of consciousness. Can humanity free itself from the relentless flow of nature and its simulacra? Is there no chance of suspending this flow of images into firm experience, into a memory, into a dwelling?

Tarkovsky saw the narrative of *Solaris* not merely as an occasion for showing flowing liquids, wide-eyed gazes and camera tricks, but as a framework that would at once dramatize the nature of cinematic representation and be enriched itself by cinematic presentation. Some of his changes to the narrative were enforced by the sheer nature of the cinema, which externalizes action into the visual realm and makes impossible the direct representation of consciousness, for instance through first-person narration. Some changes are typical of cinematic adaptations in the way they convert meta-textual references into meta-visual ones, which suspend the narrative in reflections on the medium. For instance, Lem's off-handed comparison of Sartorius to Don Quixote becomes in the film a repeated study of an engraved illustration from an old edition of Cervantes' novel, which is amongst the few mementos Kelvin takes to the spacecraft. More striking is the way Kelvin views both Berton's debriefing and Gibarian's suicide note on video, moreover in Tarkovsky's characteristic black-and-white widescreen format. Berton's film purports to show (in colour) the slime of Solaris forming all manner of shapes, but instead it seems to show merely mist and water. 'Why did you only shoot clouds?' asks the main interrogator. The authorities' failure to see Berton's experience is not one of film technology, but of their own limited vision. This is Tarkovsky's most direct reference to his own cinematic method. Like Berton's, his film may seem to show merely the surface continuity of nature (flowing water, rushing wind, ploughed earth) in long, continuous takes; however, as on the planet Solaris, when observed by human subjects these flows form themselves into discontinuous folds and shapes that interact with the spectator's own memories and fantasies. Tarkovsky was not forcing all of this into Lem's novel, in which Kelvin remarks on the suitability of photography, film and television for recording the surface features and 'pulsing of plasma' on Solaris.[33]

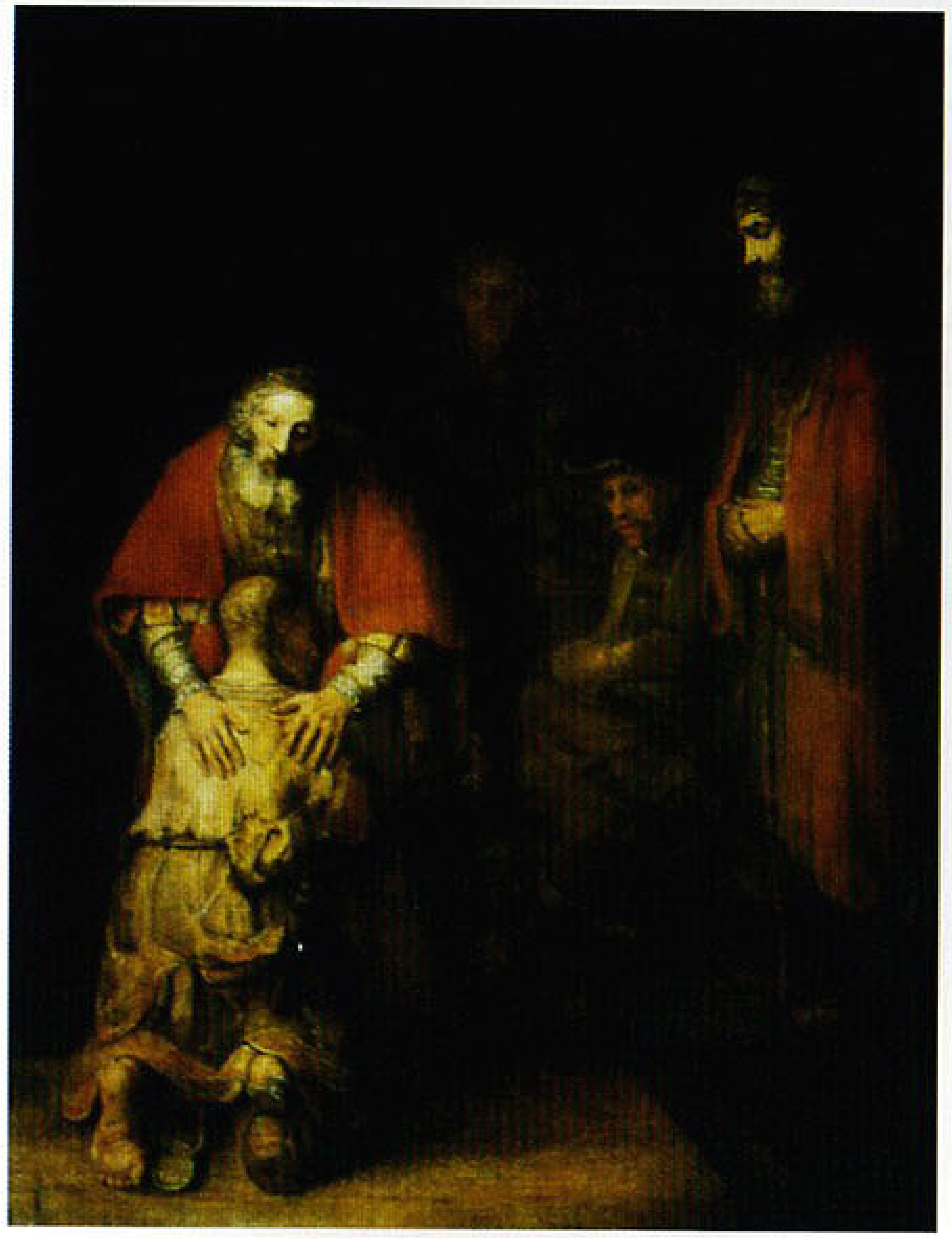
Don Quixote (*Solaris*).

Pushkin's death mask (*Solaris*).

True, Tarkovsky also added references to Russian literature. The characters in *Solaris* mention both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, and Pushkin's death-mask is prominently displayed both on earth and on the orbital,



The return of the prodigal cosmonaut (*Solaris*).



Rembrandt, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1660s).

alongside *Don Quixote*. Tarkovsky has Snaut repeat the argument of Viacheslav Ivanov's famous essay 'Ancient Terror' concerning the historical transition from Greek paganism to Christian monotheism: 'we've lost our cosmic sense,' he says, '[b]ut at least we now have hope'.[34] The film could easily be read through this essay as a glimpsing of the primeval faith in an absolute Goddess. After all, in Lem's novel the drunken Snaut explicitly identifies Hari as 'fair Aphrodite, born of the ocean';[35] in one discussion of the film Tarkovsky described Kelvin as 'a man who experiences anew – and overcomes – his ancient past'.[36] The point of pursuing such literary citations or parallels is not to ennoble the profane cinema with literary authority, but to activate another level of images in Kelvin and in the spectator, what might be called their imaginary, the investigation of which, Tarkovsky suggests, is the particular province of the cinema.

A similar function is performed by the quotation of painting in the film. Tarkovsky once stated categorically that 'to build the *mise-en-scène*' based on paintings would be 'to create re-animated painting and therefore to kill the cinema' (UR 47). This statement appears to be flatly contradicted by the citation of Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son* in the final shot of *Solaris*. But is this Tarkovsky's citation or Kelvin's? One could argue the point, but it is necessary in any case to recognize that this argument would touch upon the central issues of the film, namely to what extent one is in control of the images that comprise one's consciousness.

The photograph of the mother (*Solaris*).

The photograph of Hari on the lawn (*Solaris*).

The particular ability of cinema to address the imaginary is evident in Tarkovsky's treatment of photographs. In the prologue on earth we are shown the black-and-white photograph of Kelvin's mother in a frame on the sideboard. Then, when Kelvin is burning his archive, a photograph of Hari lies on the grass alongside a partially burnt photograph of an unknown woman in a bonnet standing at a window. It appears that Kelvin takes the photos of his mother and of Hari to the spacecraft. When Hari finds her own image she fails to recognize it until she sees herself looking at it in the mirror, although she later recognizes Kelvin's mother in the family film he shows. Still photographs are also used by the other crew members: Gibarian left a book with photographs of Armenian churches, while Snaut is examining photographs of his infant guest.

At the end of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* Kelvin's memories, films, photographs and visions all merge into a continuous fantasy that tempts him with its fluidity. His earthly home, the spacecraft and the alien planet Solaris merge into one; simulacra of Hari multiply and fill his visual field. These representations promise to settle into symbols, that is, conceptual representations that will yield some determinate meaning. Yet Kelvin is frustrated by the immateriality of it all and resists tarrying in the realm of representation. The problem is revealed to be not that of accessing one's past but of getting back from the past and the entire imaginary realm into the present and into self-possession.

Hari recognizes her photo while looking in the mirror (*Solaris*).

This is, in a sense, the very problem that any movie-goer experiences when the lights go up. Tarkovsky hoped that the spectator,

> having been immersed in the previously unknown and fantastic atmosphere of Solaris and having returned to earth, would acquire the ability to breathe freely and in the familiar way, that he become refreshingly light in this familiarity. In short, that he feel the salvific bitterness of nostalgia.[37]

It is not the viewer's own nostalgia, but that of Kelvin for the planet to which he cannot return, unlike the viewer who walks confidently out of the door. Nonetheless, the viewer's consciousness has been disrupted by the sensory plenitude of the film, which resists the mere flow of time with a semblance of presence. It suggests that if any ethical or metaphysical programme can be ascribed to Tarkovsky, it is that of cultivating a patient attention and appreciation of the unrepeatable and unrepresentable tissues of life within each present moment.

6 Imaginary

The years of *Solaris* and *Mirror* were filled with unrealized proposals and screenplays, most of them co-authored with Fridrikh Gorenshtein or Aleksandr Misharin: 'House with a Gable', 'Bright Wind', 'Sardor' (aka 'Leprosy' and 'Renunciation'), 'The Idiot' and 'Hoffmanniana'. In addition to these relatively advanced projects, Tarkovsky constantly compiled lists of ideas on which he hoped to work, the sheer number of which makes a mockery of his statement, made after the arduous completion of *Stalker*, that 'Whenever I have conceived of a film I have made it. I've never rejected a conception.'[1]

After the success of *Mirror*, however, Tarkovsky not only became much more focused in identifying and pursuing projects, but the projects themselves were invariably more focused in terms of the classical unities of time, place and action:

> I used to find it interesting to utilize as fully as possible the all-encompassing possibilities of combining in a single succession both a chronicle and other temporal levels, dreams and the confusion of events that place the characters before unexpected tests and questions. Now I don't want there to be any time between units of montage. I want time and its flow to exist and be evident within the shot, while the montage suture would mean the continuation of action and nothing more, so that it no longer introduced a temporal shift and ceased to perform the function of selection and the dramatic organization of time [*UR* 20].

Arkadii and Boris Strugatsky's story 'Roadside Picnic' provided the perfect opportunity for this; after reading it, Tarkovsky noted the possibility for

'flowing, detailed action but at the same time balanced and purely ideal – thus semi-transcendent, absurd, absolute' (*CS* 375). Before Tarkovsky could achieve the almost classical simplicity and clarity of his late work, however, he had to continue to transform his very practice of cinema.

In the years leading up to *Mirror*, Tarkovsky spoke on numerous occasions of the need for a director to sacrifice the initial conception of his film in the course of production:

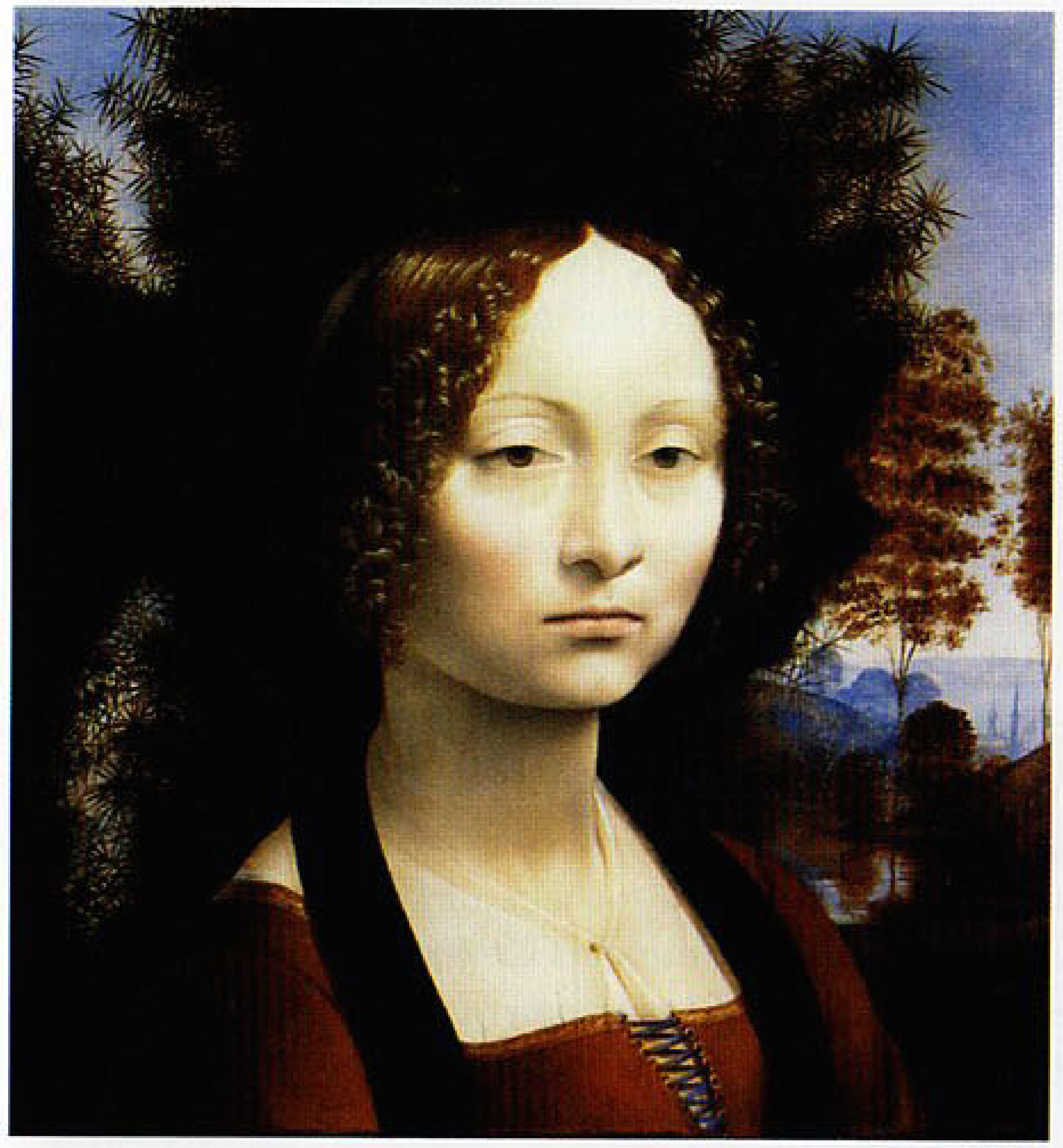
> In the final analysis a talented director often creates a magnificent, beautiful conception and is prepared to follow it exclusively, but then suddenly destroys it, for he wants to approach life in the attempt to rise above the idea of one or another individual episode. [. . .] Battling with one's own conception is frequently capable of lending the film wholeness and emotionality, without which there is no true art.[2]

What resists the author's conception is less external obstacles than the very 'tissue of the work', the innate resistance of material design. There is no better example of this than the way that Tarkovsky's masterpiece *Mirror* arose out of a suspect, seemingly self-indulgent obsession:

> This will be a picture dedicated to the most beautiful time in a man's life. We want to make a film about what childhood means for a man. About the longing for childhood and the nostalgia for what has been lost that exist in each of us. And it will also be a film about a Mother. About her difficult life, her joys, her losses and misfortunes, her predestination and her immortality.[3]

The rigorous method that Tarkovsky developed for executing this rather expansive conception ensured that the material itself would be allowed to dictate its own rhythm and structure. Although the original title for the project was 'Confession' (*Ispoved'*), and although it begins with the declaration 'I can speak', the result was an almost scientific analysis of the images that comprised the artist's consciousness.

One such image was that of Leonardo da Vinci. At first, Tarkovsky relates, he intended to use Leonardo's instructions for painting a battle as a voice-over accompanying footage of the destruction of the local church in Iurevets in 1938. Later this episode was omitted, and in its stead there appeared several quotations of a purely visual nature, most

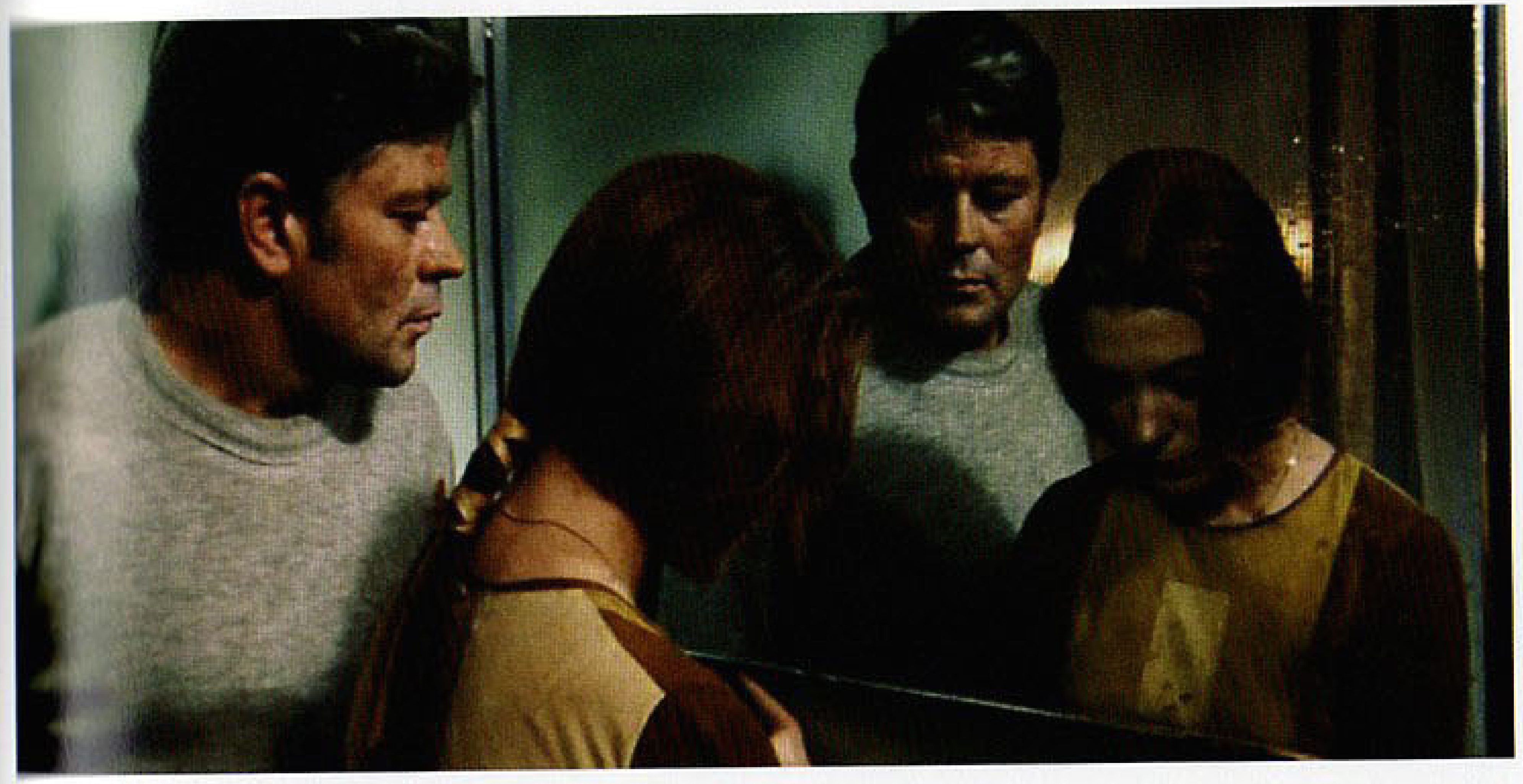


Leonardo da Vinci, *Ginevra de' Benci*, 1470s.

notably the large book on Leonardo and the fragment from Leonardo's *Ginevra di Benci* in the episode of the father's arrival home from war. The portrait is echoed throughout the film – from the prologue to the scene of the bed-ridden Author in the finale – by the presence of foliage at the edge of the frame. 'In this strange manner', Tarkovsky comments,

> an episode that had been monolithic was realized in a completely different way. The idea of the interaction between the present and the past was fragmented and became a component of separate scenes of the picture. It could not be the basis for the entire film, which is what I thought it would become. Evidently it was insufficient and therefore it entered into a kind of emotional or (I would say) musical intonation for the entire film, which speaks of things that are much clearer, more concrete and conceptual, relating to ideas [*UR* 30–31].

In retrospect one sees that *Ginevra di Benci* played a crucial role in *Solaris* as well, for instance in the design of Hari's dress. By isolating and



Hari's dress (*Solaris*).

analysing the constituent elements of the director's imaginary, *Mirror* raises more directly one of the central questions of *Solaris*, namely, how one discriminates between the original experience and its representations in memory or imagination. In *Mirror* it is not the protagonist but the viewer who is forced to work out which of the two characters played by Margarita Terekhova is her real persona and which a copy (though the protagonist Aleksei quickly points out that he always remembers his mother in the guise of his ex-wife). Even Tarkovsky's colleagues at Mosfilm – and countless viewers since – have wondered, in the words of Marlen Khutsiev, 'Who is who?'[4] After the film began screening Tarkovsky admitted that 'sometimes confusion arises, but it is no big deal (*eto ne strashno*)' (MJ 427). The film thus underscores the inseparability of images from the imagination that retains and identifies them.

The bounds of the director's conception extend far beyond the autobiographical screenplay and shooting script, beyond even the specific memories and associations on which Tarkovsky based *Mirror*; the conception includes also the implicit and perhaps unconscious scaffolding that supports any narrative, indeed which supports narrativity itself, and which reveals itself only when it collapses under its own weight, that is to say, when experience outstrips the subject's attempt to contain or capture it. Tarkovsky contrasted his presence within the frame to that of Fellini in *8½* or Bergman in *Wild Strawberries*, which 'fail by introducing the Author as a regular character [which] makes the film a plot-based narration'; by contrast, *Mirror* is itself 'the process of the maturation of the film and its conception, meaning that it won't contain a film as such' (OS 132). In this light Tarkovsky's entrance into the frame (as a bed-ridden patient behind a screen at the end of the film) is merely an acknowledgement of the fragile embodiment of the imaginary and of the violence with which time consumes not only the subject's conception, but also his body. This sequence, which originally showed Tarkovsky's face, was among the most controversial in the film; as Lev Arnshtam commented, 'Any lyrical work becomes universal because it is individual; but there is no need to append a photograph.'[5] Aleksandr Alov argued that concealing the director's face 'gives me [i.e., the spectator] the possibility of correlating everything that happens with myself, with my own sphere of experiences'.[6] This, then, is one key to poetic cinema: the spectator's appropriation of the work incinerates the author's conception, releasing it as a free potential that can be adopted by the viewing subject in an act of envoicing, envisioning, emplotment and even embodiment. One of the conditions for success in this volatile process is the dependence of the work on a shared lexicon of images, a social imaginary, which is renewed in the crucible of the aesthetic event.

After declaring on 10 July 1984 his intention to remain in the West, Tarkovsky received a provocative letter from his father, prompting him to insist: 'I was and remain a Soviet artist.' When challenged on the 'accessibility' of his films he would frequently respond, as he did in a 1974 interview, 'I consider myself a part of the people. I live in my own country and contemplate the same processes and problems as my contemporaries; I love, hate and worry in the same way, and therefore I consider that I express the ideas of the people.'[7] Similar in many ways to that of his contemporaries Vasilii Shukshin and Vladimir Vysotsky, Tarkovsky's innovative work was closely coordinated with key motifs in the Soviet imaginary, even as its original treatment of these motifs raised suspicions of alien designs and meanings. Some of these suspicions were fed by Tarkovsky's appeal to the broader canons of European art, but there was nothing explicitly seditious in that; unable to put a finger on overt ideological offences in *Mirror*, hostile *apparatchiks* resorted to vague complaints about the 'sad tonality' of the Spanish episode or the 'un-Soviet' sound of Bach on the soundtrack.[8]

On the other hand, what made Tarkovsky's work so meaningful for Soviet viewers was its ability to reinvest images of common experience

with a sincerity that had always been lacking in the public sphere. Tarkovsky's co-screenwriter Aleksandr Misharin recalls telling Tarkovsky that in their day 'the main thing is not the plot, but to make a work where the microphone is not at the lips but somewhere in the throat, so that one hears the gasping, so that there is life'.[9] While Misharin's image more vividly calls to mind Vysotsky than Tarkovsky, it suggests that, at a time when public discourse (including art) was thoroughly discredited, artists responded by reinscribing the Soviet imaginary into the individual body, whether as a voice or as a faculty of vision. The very corporeality of Tarkovsky's vision explains the shattering effect his death had for Soviet people, whose homages frequently begin with a recollection of their learning of his death over shortwave radio or from friends. It is therefore misleading to classify Tarkovsky as a practitioner of *auteur* cinema alongside his Western counterparts; the authorial principle had a fundamentally different status in Soviet art. Instead of using the imaginary as a representational language in which one could express a thought, Tarkovsky explored the distances between public images and ineffably private experience. He refrained from exploding these distances, preferring to open them up as a space of possibility; his art was less powerful than empowering.

There should be nothing surprising in the fact that Tarkovsky professed to be a Soviet artist, nor indeed that he felt obliged to do so in a letter to his father, the poet Arsenii Tarkovsky, who in his day had contributed to the formation of the Soviet imaginary, most of all with two pioneering works for radio, *A Tale of Sphagnum* (1931) and *Glass* (1932). The Soviet enthusiasm for transforming nature in order to heighten and harness its productivity was at the centre of *A Tale of Sphagnum*, which told of the efforts of peat-harvesters to rid the landscape of wasteful bogs; by separating the waters from the earth, Soviet engineers hoped to increase the area of arable land, quicken the flow of rivers, improve air quality and win in the bargain valuable fuel from the peat. The Soviet imaginary projected this desire to manage nature as a proliferation of power networks, such as the electrical grid that brought light and warmth to the countryside or the system of waterways that ensured the efficient movement of goods and people. By transferring literary production to the radio waves, Arsenii Tarkovsky's work contributed to the analogous task of harnessing artists' creative power in a nationwide communications network. At all levels these neat projects defied reality. For one thing, they were rooted in the modernist imagination, reflected in such science-fiction texts as the Bolshevik philosopher Aleksandr Bogdanov's *Red Star* (1907) and *Engineer Menni* (1912). They ultimately contributed to the mindset that chased the population into a network of giant forced-labour camps and to the spoiling of the environment. Indeed, the younger Tarkovsky's *Stalker* – with its ruined post-industrial landscape and post-human population – can be viewed as a polemical sequel to his father's 1931 radio play. It is this shared imaginary, more than their blood kinship, that made Arsenii's poems key elements in *Mirror*, *Stalker* and *Nostalghia*, and which make them eminently quotable in any discussion of the son's work.

Prior to becoming a filmmaker Tarkovsky's biography followed a pattern typical of the Soviet imaginary. After leaving Moscow's Oriental Institute, where he studied Arabic, he embarked on a geological expedition and journey of self-discovery to the Far East. This kind of adventure was a commonplace in Soviet film; it formed the basis for Mikhail Kalatozov's and Sergei Urusevsky's classic *The Unsent Letter* (1959), in which two men and a girl are stranded on a distant river with fatal consequences, and is intimated in Georgii Danelia's *I Stroll around Moscow* (1962), shot by Vadim Iusov. Yet even here Tarkovsky appears to have been less interested in participating in the social imaginary than in analysing its role in constituting personal experience. Tarkovsky later commented that the problem with *The Unsent Letter* was not its schematic narrative and characters, but

> that it did not follow to the end the path that they marked out themselves. They should have unflinchingly studied with the camera the factual fates of these people in the *taiga*, not worrying about whether to resolve the story linkages that were given in the screenplay. [. . .] The characters are not so much created as destroyed. Or rather they are incompletely destroyed [ZV 180].

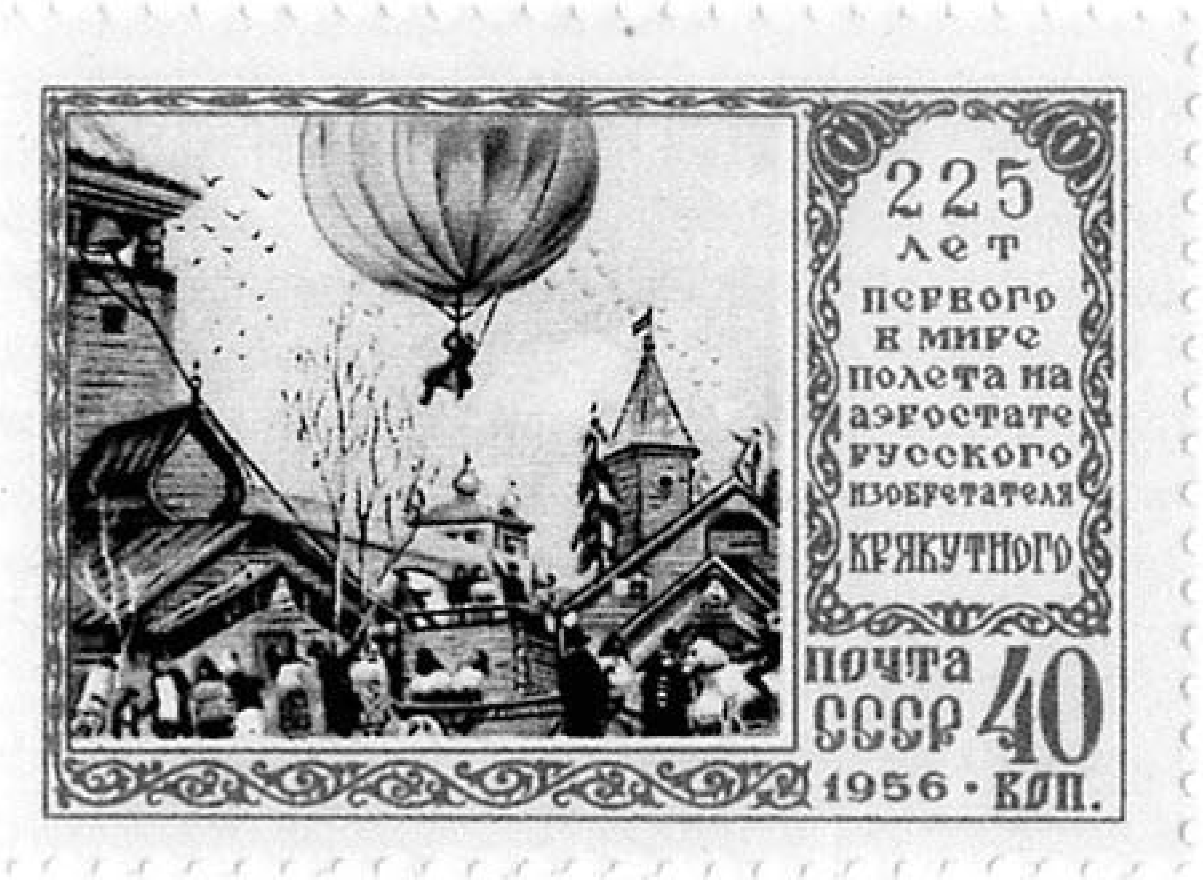
As early as 1962 Tarkovsky recorded his interest in exploring the manifold layers of personal experience and memory, remarking on the distinct kinds of authenticity achieved in each layer: 'there is a great difference between the way you imagine the home in which you were born and which you have not seen for many years, and your direct contemplation of this home after a long interval of time' (ST 29; ZV 123). While not denying his complicity in the Soviet imaginary, Tarkovsky saw film as a means of analysing its encounter with lived time.

Motifs of the Soviet imaginary are evident throughout Tarkovsky's early work, including his treatment of the war in *There Will Be No Leave Today* and *Ivan's Childhood*, his concern to relate physical labour and artistic creativity in *Steamroller and Violin*, his attraction to polar exploration in the co-written screenplay 'Antarctic: Distant Land', and even his interest in Hemingway and Faulkner, two American authors whose works of adventure and discovery were assimilated by the Soviet canons. Alberto Moravia dismissed *Ivan's Childhood* for merely reversing Stalinist clichés, and Tarkovsky later acknowledged the justice of Moravia's critique:

> if before the boy went in polished boots (he [Moravia] has in mind *The Son of the Regiment*, an adaptation of [Valentin] Kataev), carried a sabre, in a Cossack hat, served with a cavalry detachment, then it follows that now Ivan is in rags, destitute, crossing swamps, etc. . . . If there the boy remained alive, then here he dies. It's the same scheme, only here it is developed differently.[10]

Tarkovsky's frequent references to aviation follow the dominant pattern of the Soviet imaginary, beginning with the prologue to *Andrei Rublëv*, based on the legend of the pre-modern aviator Kriakutnyi, continuing with the pictures of balloons and Soviet space pioneers in the opening episode of *Solaris*, and culminating in Tarkovsky's and Gorenshtein's 1971 adaptation of Aleksandr Beliaev's fantasy *Ariel*, which Tarkovsky put aside to work on *Mirror*.[11] In this screenplay Beliaev's story about a boy who takes flight becomes a meditation on the vagaries of existing in an imaginary sphere where dream merges with reality. When the protagonist Filipp ends up in the trenches of Verdun, he is incapable of providing solace to a young conscript named Aleksandr: 'A hell of flames and metal raged over Verdun. This was the twentieth century being christened in a font of fire' (CS 247). The finale of *Ariel* leads directly into *Mirror*, where images of Soviet aviation are followed by footage of World War II and an atomic explosion, showing how dreams nestle alongside nightmares whenever the social imaginary enters the real time of human experience.

Thus, while Tarkovsky paid lip-service to official ideology, his comments always stress the individual's experience of it. Presenting his idiosyncratic concept of communism he predicted that the conflict between technical progress and natural entropy would last until the stage



Soviet stamp commemorating the 225th anniversary of Kriakutnyi's legendary flight.

of 'social freedom, where [man] won't have to worry about his daily bread any more, about a roof over his head, about securing his children's future; where he will be able to go deep inside himself with the same energy he previously devoted to external freedom.'[12] The same goes for the structural role played in his films by such Soviet clichés as 'overcoming'. As Tarkovsky said à propros of *Solaris*:

> All my protagonists are united by a single passion – for overcoming. No knowledge of life can be won without a colossal expenditure of spiritual power. There may be grave losses on this path, but all the more profound and rich will be the achievements. In order to arrive at an understanding of the laws of life, in order to become conscious of what is best in oneself and one's environment, what comprises the beauty and inner truth of our existence, our being (and not our mere subsistence [*bytovanie*]), in order to remain true to oneself and one's duty to others and oneself, all my protagonists must pass through a tense sphere of meditation, searching and achievement.[13]

If the ideal of the Soviet imaginary was a closed system of dynamic stability, in which natural flows and individual desires are harnessed for maximum efficiency, Tarkovsky sought to dramatize the way these same natural flows enter into human time, as a power that both enables and distorts. He channels the flows of the Soviet imaginary just as he utilized

Tarkovsky's flying peasant (*Andrei Rublev*).

the continuous flow of film, not to uphold its seamless continuity, but precisely to settle into the folds and seams that form the fabric of individual experience.[14] The task of 'overcoming' is communicated to the spectator through the resistance of the film to easy assimilation.

Tarkovsky's most powerful engagements with the Soviet imaginary were not always explicit. Rejecting the Soviet-speak criticism that his cinema was insufficiently integrated with 'life', Tarkovsky explained:

> Excuse me, but this is nonsense. For man lives within events, within his time, and he and his own thoughts are a fact of the reality existing today. [. . .] To judge cinematic art by its links to a particular theme [Tarkovsky names agriculture, the working class and the Soviet intelligentsia] is hopeless in terms of achieving a quality result [*UR* 22, 23].

Thus, for example, while the premise of Lem's novel – the planet Solaris presents a seething flow of yellow slime that must be controlled and channelled for human benefit – was closely keyed into the Soviet imaginary,

The history of manned flight (*Solaris*).

Tarkovsky's *Solaris* took a rather more pessimistic view: the only way to control the flow is to kill it or freeze it, but it always seeps back in through the cracks. A similar concern haunts *Stalker*, where natural flows repossess the structures with which humans have sought to control them. The irony is that the hostile alien will against which humans struggle is the very source of life. Lived time arises from the friction between human desire and the seepage of impersonal nature. At the end of *Sculpting in Time* Tarkovsky remarks that even such a rich civilization as ancient China nonetheless succumbed when it 'collided with the material world that surrounded [it]', just as 'an individual collides with society' (*ST* 240–41; *ZV* 348). Still, Tarkovsky concludes: 'It is not that we live in an imaginary world, but that we create it ourselves. And therefore we ourselves depend on its failings, while we could depend on its strengths.' *Mirror*, in my reading, concerns the possibility of this very change.

Much of the confusion in the history of *Mirror* stems in a cardinal shift of emphasis that occurred during the film's preparation. Conceived as a film about Tarkovsky's mother, it eventually became an autobiographical study:

> At one point [Aleksandr] Misharin and I wrote the screenplay 'White, White Day'. I did not yet know what this film would be about, how it would be organized in the screenplay and what role would be occupied there by the image, not even the image but the storyline, more precisely the storyline of the mother. All I knew was that I kept having the same dream about the place where I was born. I dreamt of the house. It was as if I was entering, or more precisely not entering but circling around it. There was some strange shift. [. . .] I thought this feeling had some material sense, that one cannot just be persecuted by such a dream. There was something in it, something very important. And I thought, because of something I'd read, that I would be able to free myself from my feelings because it was quite a grave feeling, something nostalgic. Something was pulling me back into the past, leaving nothing ahead. [. . .] Well, I thought, let me write a story. However it all gradually began to take form as a film. Moreover a strange thing happened. I indeed was freed from these impressions, but this psychotherapy turned out to be worse than the cause. When I lost these feelings I felt that I had, in a sense, lost myself. Everything was complicated. These feelings disappeared, but nothing formed in their place. Although, to be honest, I had somewhere supposed something of the kind, and even in the screenplay it was written that one shouldn't return to old places, whatever it might be: one's home, the place one was born, or the people one has met. And although that was thought up theoretically, it turned out to be quite accurate. The main thing: it turned out that the sense and idea of the film was not at all to free oneself of memories [*UR* 28–9].

Tarkovsky thus indicates his disagreement with Proust and Freud, both of whom (allegedly) encouraged the idea that telling a story helps to rid oneself of the past. Tarkovsky stresses that, in the process of seeking something personal, he found something objective and demonstrable – not a repressed memory but a clarity of vision.

The idea of representing one's world by isolating its principle of presentation obliged Tarkovsky to look beyond his personal imaginary to find its intersection with that of Soviet society. At one point he spoke of filming the rehearsal of a military parade on the eve of the anniversary of the October Revolution: 'This episode will take place on a single street, with military hardware, crowds of people, and here [it will be possible] to connect everything into a single knot.'[15] This scene, reminiscent of the May Day parade in Khutsiev's *The Gate of Il'ich* (*I Am*

Twenty), was 'linked to the hum of life and with people who are brought together and separated by this hum of life'. The episode at the printing plant is not remembered but imagined; it was based on a widespread anecdote of the time, which features also in Vasilii Grossman's novel *Life and Fate* (part 2, chapter 10), where a single transposed letter turns Stalin's name into a profanity and results in a seven-year imprisonment for the guilty proof-reader. One can easily believe that these coincidences arose spontaneously as points of intersection between Tarkovsky's individual imagination and the social imaginary. As Tarkovsky wrote concerning the war footage he found for *Mirror*,

> When before me on the screen there appeared, as if out of non-being, people who were tormented by unbearable, inhuman labour, a horrible and tragic fate, it immediately became clear to me that there was no way this episode could not become the centre, the very essence, the nerve and heart of our picture, which had begun merely as an intimate lyrical memory [*ST* 130; *ZV* 243–4].

The intersections between the personal imaginary and that of society are vividly explored in the documentary sequences of *Mirror*, which show bullfights and the Spanish Civil War, Soviet aviation in the late 1930s, Soviet forces fighting in World War II and celebrating victory, atomic explosions, and the Cultural Revolution in China and ensuing Sino-Russian conflict. The three periods covered by the documentary footage coincide with the chronological foci of the autobiographical narration: 1935–6, 1943–5 and 1969. At the simplest level the documentary footage merely provides background for the autobiographical narrative; thus the Spanish footage might well be seen as a kind of flashback to explain the presence in Moscow of the Spanish family, which finds itself tugged in the conflicting directions of nostalgia and assimilation. It could be taken as a tacit acknowledgement of the limited ability of fictional cinema to represent the war; Soviet war films (*The Fate of a Man*, *The Two Fëdors*, *The Cranes Are Flying*) tended to focus on the home front and the war's aftermath, but when fighting was shown – from Mikhail Chiaureli's *Fall of Berlin* (1949) to Mikhail Romm's *Everyday Fascism* (1965) and Tarkovsky's own *Ivan's Childhood* – documentary footage was frequently used, as if to authenticate the fictional narrative. In *Mirror*, though, accompanied by Baroque music and Arsenii Tarkovsky's poems, the documentary footage performs a more complex set of functions. It is thus important to consider the precise origin of the footage and the reasons for its inclusion in *Mirror*.

Documentary footage from Spain featured in *Mirror*.

The Spanish footage is mostly mined from Roman Karmen's newsreels (some of the material for which appears in different form in Esfir Shub's *Spain*, 1939). Karmen became justly famous for his courage under fire, which helped to rally the entire progressive world in support of the Republican cause. Like the heroic aviators or tractor drivers of the Soviet imaginary, Karmen and his machine served all of humanity in battle with the hostile elements. It is likely that Tarkovsky saw Karmen's images as a young child and shared in the widespread fascination with the Spanish Civil War, which seemed to many Soviets an unusually noble and idealistic passage in their history, a return to the pure ideals of the revolution before Stalinism, and a rare case when the USSR was on the 'right' side in international conflicts (at least in the dominant view of intellectuals). In short, the protagonist's encounter with the aging Spanish immigrants in Moscow is both an echo and a verification of the memories he was fed in childhood.

No less important, of course, are the formal qualities of Karmen's footage. The shots of glamorous women in high heels running into the underground capture the unimaginable horror of aerial bombing in a large modern city, something that had never been experienced before on such a scale. The shot of the small girl rubbing a stain off her dress is reminiscent of one of Tarkovsky's favourite anecdotes: in World War II

Documentary footage from Spain featured in *Mirror*.

a soldier was hauled before a firing squad in a muddy field, but before taking his position he took off his coat, folded it tidily and began searching for a dry place to lay it. Tarkovsky reasoned that the victim acted 'automatically, out of habit, because his thoughts were far away on the brink of death' (UR 25); where were that little girl's thoughts? There is, finally and most poignantly, the girl who turns smiling towards the camera and gradually, as if under the gaze of the machine, adopts an expression of utter horror. These shots are all carefully edited, but Tarkovsky insisted that their inward tension bespoke their authenticity. In the original edit there was another shot of a child bidding his father farewell, which stuck out conspicuously wherever it was placed; Tarkovsky traced it to its origin and saw that it was one of three identical takes, meaning that 'at the very moment that the child was flowing with tears the cameraman had asked him to repeat what he had just done: to bid farewell once more, to embrace and kiss [his father] once more' (UR 72). As a result, this shot 'had been invaded by the devil and he [i.e., the devil] could not reconcile himself to the atmosphere [*sreda*] [. . .] of sincerity' (UR 73). Thus, in addition to their resonance in the social imaginary and individual memory, these shots possess a kind of innate poignancy that resists being reduced to a mere function in the film.

Documentary footage from Crimea featured in *Mirror*.

Tarkovsky spoke repeatedly of the footage of the crossing of the Lake Sivash, a marshy region of the Crimea that had also been the site of bloody fighting in the Russian Civil War.

> I had never seen anything of the kind; as a rule one deals with insincere skits or short, fragmentary shots of literally conceived wartime 'life' or with 'showy' footage in which one senses too much planning and too little genuine truth. And I saw no possibility of uniting this salad with a single temporal feeling. And suddenly I find an unprecedented case of newsreel footage: an episode, an entire and unified event, extended in time and shot (unusually) in a single place and telling of one of the most dramatic events of the 1943 offensive. [. . .] I couldn't believe that such an enormous quantity of film had been spent on the extended observation of a single location [ST 130; ZV 243].[16]

The studio authorities protested vigorously against this sombre footage, forcing Tarkovsky to complement it with shots of triumphant Soviet forces liberating Prague and taking Berlin. Here too, though, Tarkovsky's vision remains detached; the shot of Hitler's corpse is followed by one of the cameraman shooting it. In both sequences Tarkovsky does not so much represent the war as investigate the ways in which it has been presented and has consequently shaped his vision, without necessarily having been understood.

The final documentary sequence confirms the general pattern and suggests a link to other issues in the film. Many of the shots are taken from easily identifiable sources, namely Aleksandr Medvedkin's documentaries

Aleksandr Medvedkin's documentary in *Mirror*.

A Letter to a Chinese Friend (1969) and *Night over China* (1971), although Medvedkin in turn had taken some of his footage from elsewhere.[17] The Chinese youths (on Damansky Island) brandishing their Little Red Books and posters of Mao are wholly (and belligerently) in possession of their own imaginary, impenetrable to an alien gaze. The Soviet soldiers who observe them are outwardly calm, even bemused, but one catches glimmers of an almost primeval terror before such fanaticism. The confrontation between the stoic gaze and the proliferation of images is dramatized by a bust of Mao, which proceeds to multiply into dozens of identical images, which ironically recede into utter banality and insignificance. These images – evidently filmed from a book – are the only ones in *Mirror* that impose a definite authorial viewpoint. When the image takes full possession of its human subjects, these shots seem to say, it loses both its meaningfulness and its authenticity. It becomes an idol, whereas the opaque image that resists full absorption into the viewing subject preserves the potential of meaning. The catharsis of the documentary sequences is akin to the shower that the Mother takes at the end of the scene at the printing plant, which both washes away the ashes of the imaginary and restores its meaningful interchange with the individual psyche.

Aleksandr Medvedkin's documentary in *Mirror*.

The separation between the documentary and fictional layers in *Mirror* is far from absolute. For one thing, the documentary sequences come at specific moments in the narrative. The Spanish sequence follows two autobiographical episodes set around 1935, while the World War II and Chinese sequences come at the end of the episode of the military instructor set around 1943, which is introduced by the grown narrator's recollection of his first love. Given its placement the Chinese sequence might be taken as a critique of Stalinism. However, it was originally accompanied by footage of the Vietnam War and the wars in the Middle East, in order (Tarkovsky claimed) to show the path of the Soviet soldier from World War II 'through the atom bomb, Vietnam [. . .] and the possibility of new crises'.[18] That was the official explanation, but Tarkovsky also motivated the shift to China as conveying 'two gazes: 1) issuing from the time of the narrative about the war, 2) from one who lives today, from the author'.[19] In addition to this composite 'gaze', the documentary sequences are not completely separate from the 'fictional' narrative that surrounds them. In the first case the documentary and narrative sequences alternate several times before staying with the documentary footage, first to the sounds of flamenco and then to

Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. In the second case a short first shot (in black and white) is followed by a passage from the main narration in colour, before returning to the documentary sequence. In both instances it is as if the protagonist's vision is flickering on the borderline between different states of consciousness.

The aural accompaniment adds a further level of thickness to these sequences, especially the second, which proceeds to the strains of Eduard Artem'ev's electronic score and then to Arsenii Tarkovsky's poem 'Life, life'. Of the use of his father's poems in *Mirror* Tarkovsky said: 'These poems are not an illustration; they are just poems born at the time about which one or another episode is telling' (UR 29). This claim suggests a parallel to the epilogue to *Andrei Rublëv*, in which (in the original conception) each icon was to be 'accompanied by the same musical theme that sounded in the episode of Rublëv's life corresponding to the time during which the icon was conceived'.[20] In fact, the three poems actually read in the film all date from the 1960s, long after the events they illustrate before and during the war.[21] Moreover, the fact that the choice of poems was finalized only quite late in the film's production suggests that they must have exerted little influence on the images that they accompany. Much more important than autobiographical authenticity were the concrete juxtapositions of images with words that resonate at multiple levels of the author's imaginary. As the rain streams down outside the mother picks up a notebook of her husband's poems and reads:

[. . .] rivers pulsated in the crystal,
Mountains smoked, seas quivered,
And you held the crystal sphere
In your palm, and you slept on a throne,
And, God almighty, you were mine.
You awoke and transfigured
The everyday human lexicon,
And speech swelled in my throat
Full-voiced, and the word 'you' revealed
A new sense, and now meant: 'Tsar'.
Everything on earth was transfigured, even
Simple things: the basin, the jug. When
Layered and rigid water stood
Between us as if on guard.

The poem appears to comment directly on the image it accompanies, in which the rain dematerializes objects, transforming them into mere images, but the objects also contain the rain, bestowing on their human bearers an almost majestic power of speech. The poem instantiates the power of the imaginary, which regulates the flow of sensory information and turns it into meaningful experience; 'you', for instance, is revealed to be a majestic sovereign. The film is at a more distant remove, questioning whether this imaginary suspension of the sensory flow can ever be stabilized and sustained as a personal or cultural identity.

The indeterminate relationship between word and image is confirmed by the second poem, which begins towards the end of the images of the crossing of Lake Sivash. The first stanza reads like a memorial for the soldiers depicted:

I don't believe presentiments, bad omens
Do not scare me. I avoid neither slander
Nor poison. There's no such thing as death.
Everyone's immortal. Everything. Do not
Be afraid of death at seventeen years old
Or at seventy. There is only clarity and light,
Neither gloom nor death exists in this world.
Already we stand on the shore of the sea,
And I am one who chooses a net
When immortality grimly stalks.

Tarkovsky suggested that the poem 'formed and completed the meaning' of the documentary footage, helping a document of truth become 'an *image* of a spiritual labour (*podvig*) and of the price of this labour' (ST 130; ZV 244). The focus of the camera on the men themselves, and the viewer's knowledge that almost none of them would survive the war, 'gave these moments imprinted on film a particular multidimensionality and depth, engendering feelings close to a shock or catharsis' (ST 131; ZV 244). However, the second stanza shifts the focus at once inwards and forwards, into an open future:

Live in your home and your home will not fall.
I can summon forth any century,
I shall enter it and build my home in it.
This is why your children and your

Wives share a table with me,
The same table as my ancestor and grandchild:
The future is happening now,
And if I just raise my hand,
All five rays will remain with you.
Like a hoist I have supported
Every day of the past with my shoulders,
I have measured time with a surveyor's chain
And passed through it as if through the Urals.

Arsenii Tarkovsky here seems to declare independence from the Soviet imaginary; having measured time as one would the earth, he has not sought to harness its elemental power (as he did in his earlier *Tale of Sphagnum*), but rather to pass through it to the other side. In the film this line coincides with shots of a Bruegelesque winter landscape, of victory and atomic nightmare, of the boy Asaf'ev catching a bird in his hand, of Mao, etc. There can, in short, be no simple interpretation of this sequence; in fact, Tarkovsky once suggested that the poem was intended precisely to overload the spectator's sensorium and keep it from reflecting consciously on the imaginary.[22] A similar function may be ascribed to the Spaniards' conversation, in which Tarkovsky layered three distinct soundtracks, claiming that he himself could not figure out what they were saying.[23] The only way for him to clarify the film, he claimed, would be to finish adding 'lines, noises and music', that is, to complete the images.

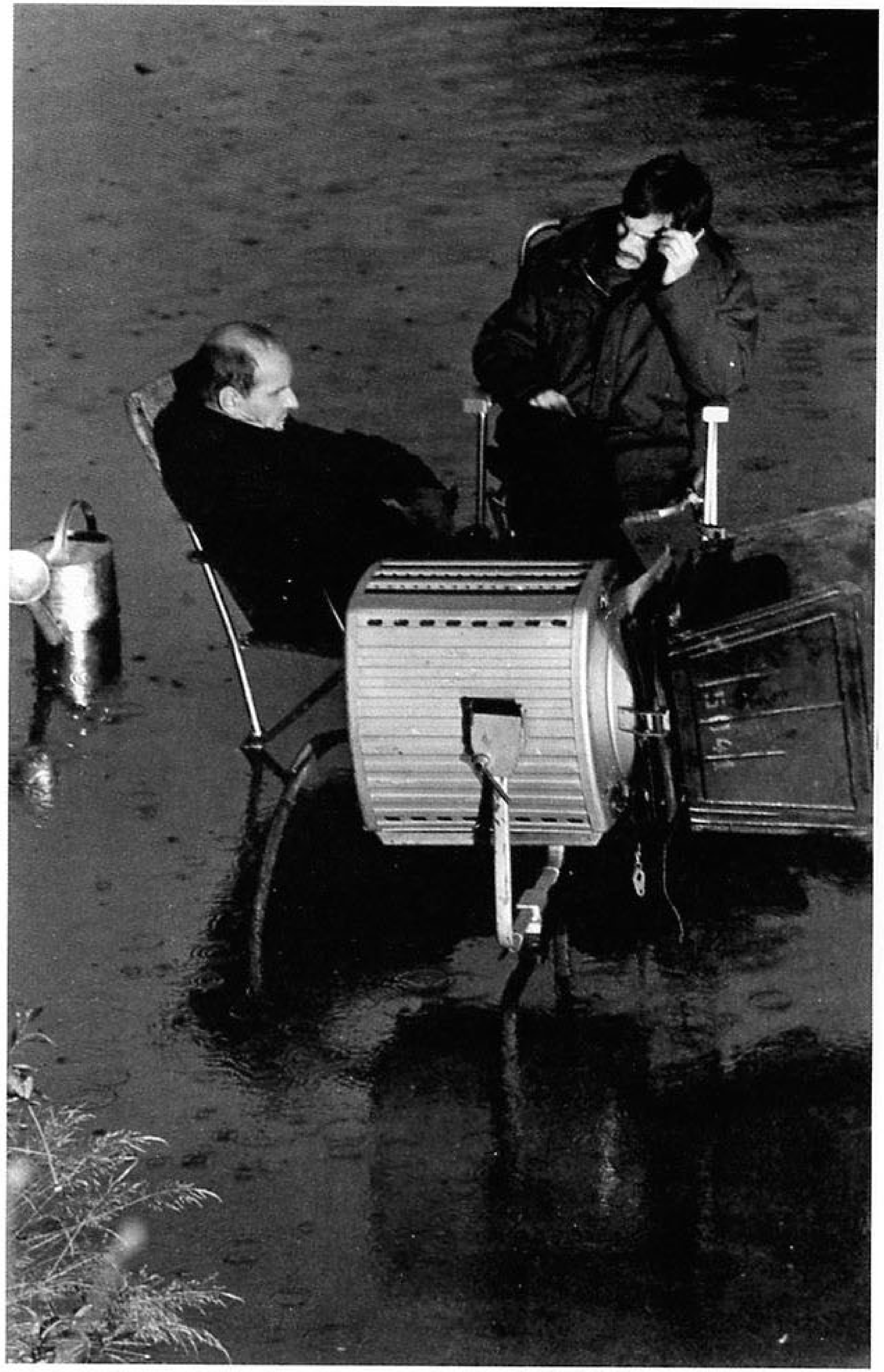
What remains from the poems is a juxtaposition of global flows and individual acts of resistance: a crystal containing pulsating rivers, a net hoisted against immortality or a hand raised against the on-rushing future. It is not the illusion that one can stop time in its tracks, but the hope that one can catch it in the meshes of experience. It was such poignant juxtapositions that led Tarkovsky, in the aftermath of *Mirror*, to ponder the nature of the image. It is no coincidence that both documentary sequences are followed by references to Leonardo, which Tarkovsky explained by referring to the peculiar distance and superiority of Leonardo's gaze: 'In *Mirror* we needed this portrait [*Ginevra di Benci*] in order [. . .] to find the measure of the eternal in the instants that flow before us' (ST 108; ZV 216). Such an image 'opens before us the possibility of interaction with infinity' (ST 109; ZV 217).

Oleg Aronson has observed that Tarkovsky 'provides the ability to deal with the infinite by indicating its presence in the mundaneness of our memory'.[24] Indeed, Tarkovsky believed that only film is able to show the friction caused when the image encounters lived time, because '[t]he cinematic image is the observation of facts in time, organized in accordance with the forms of life and with its temporal laws'.[25] Though it is not specifically a critique of the Soviet imaginary, *Mirror* seeks to redefine the viewer's very attitude towards images, not as the storehouse of the known, but as a possibility for envisioning the new.

If *Stalker* marks the moment at which the Soviet imaginary finally came a cropper – not only in the catastrophic environmental and human consequences of transforming nature, but also in its critique of desire as the basis for human economy – in his last two films Tarkovsky radically departed from the themes and images of the Soviet imaginary, intensifying instead his use of the canons of European art. *Nostalghia* is literally jammed full of architecture, art and music from the European past; in *Sacrifice* a book of Russian icons is recontextualized as part of the common European heritage alongside Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi* and Baroque music. Despite Tarkovsky's obvious reverence, these images form a social imaginary that he brought into question no less than in his Soviet films. Classic artworks emerge as ruins of the past which have been emptied of actual meaning and confront the viewer as a task for reconstruction and reappropriation. In *Nostalghia* Domenico plays Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on a cheap tape recorder with violent aural distortion. In *Sacrifice* Alexander sets fire not only to his home, but also to the entire universe of cultural signifiers which it contains.

The film in which he confronts this European imaginary most directly is *Time of Travel*, which shares with *Mirror* both an autobiographical and documentary emphasis. His constant plaint in *Time of Travel* that he prefers not to see 'beautiful' sites is not a vain hankering after an imagined 'authentic Italy', but part of a living conversation with the country. The peculiar problem of Italian space is that it is so clearly compound, shaped by centuries of human activity and mindful of its supposed status as the centre of Christendom. Tarkovsky's intervention in the European imaginary, like his forays into that of his native country, seeks not to enunciate an alternative or dissident viewpoint, but simply to create a space within which vision can re-calibrate its images vis-à-vis the world.

water



Stalker: location shot by Grigoriy Verkhovskiy.

7 Sensorium

Though he had always paid close attention to technical matters, in *Stalker* Tarkovsky was almost obsessive in his pursuit of the highest production values. The move to Tallinn, Estonia, was ostensibly caused by an earthquake at the original location at Isfara, Tadjikistan, but some collaborators felt that Tarkovsky had already been plotting the change to ensure a richer palette of colours than was possible in the arid climes of Central Asia (as suggested also by his diary entry for 22 August 1976). As soon as the move was confirmed, Tarkovsky took care to adjust the film-stock and change the aspect-ratio from widescreen to standard 4:3. However, after completing a large portion of the location shoot he suddenly realized that his material was of insufficient quality. Tarkovsky placed the blame on the suppliers for providing poor-quality film-stock, the original cameraman Georgii Rerberg for neglecting to check it, and the technicians at Mosfilm for developing it with the wrong procedure (see diary entry for 26 August 1977). Again, many at the studio remained convinced that Tarkovsky merely invented the problem as a pretext for correcting his own flawed conception. Nonetheless, after a brief but traumatic suspension in production during the autumn of 1977, the entire film was re-shot with an even more austere screenplay (although several shots from the first version are reported to have been used in the final edit). With the less-distinguished Aleksandr Kniazhinsky now installed as cameraman, Tarkovsky took personal charge of the camera during the second shoot; he also took over the duties of set designer. Tarkovsky's concern for the resolution of the image was shared by some; after the film's approval the studio head Nikolai Sizov expressed his concern that Soviet technology would not be able to make prints of sufficiently high quality.[1] For most, however, *Stalker*

The hand of Galtsev in *Ivan's Childhood*.

provided final proof that the infamously highly strung Tarkovsky had lapsed into mania.

Tarkovsky's quixotic behaviour is of a piece with the narrative of *Stalker*, where an obsessive eccentric leads two disagreeable clients through a possessed wasteland towards a room where wishes come true. As with Tarkovsky, the Stalker's partners are beset with doubt concerning the reality of the hazards that allegedly surround them from all sides. Yet they are obliged to suspend their disbelief; any doubt in the Stalker's admonitions would undercut their faith in his promise, on which they have pinned their hopes (in the case of the Writer) and their fears (in that of the Professor). They reach the Room of Desires with faith preserved, but what they actually do there – indeed whether they even cross its threshold – remains an open question. It seems that the reward for their travails has been the very acquisition of faith in the act of overcoming material resistance. Could the reward for watching Tarkovsky's films likewise be the gift of trust in the meaningfulness of the act itself?

Of course, this is precisely the question asked by *Solaris*, and it is one that Tarkovsky answered in the negative. In *Solaris* the image burns upon entering into the specific temporal atmosphere of human memory; it becomes a person. The Ocean, by contrast, is profoundly inhuman in its pursuit of a purely aesthetic (i.e., reactive and reproductive) kind of thought, one that would view the earth as if under a film of water – eminently visible, but inert, hollow, beyond living reach and without purpose.

Tarkovsky has sometimes been suspected of pursuing just such an impassive, alien view on the world. In particular, the reactions of cinema authorities to *Mirror* suggest that this was precisely the way they read the film's portrayal of the Soviet imaginary. True, Tarkovsky did not submerge Soviet images in water, as he had done with Andrei Rublëv's icons (and would do with Jan van Eyck in *Stalker*). But was this not the effect of showing war footage to the strains of Pergolesi? While he drew on stock images of Soviet culture, Tarkovsky wholly ignored its soundtrack, whether popular songs, bombastic orchestral suites or army choruses. Tarkovsky seemed in danger of becoming like the Ocean in *Solaris*, draining reality of its living juices with his camera's eerily calm gaze.

For Tarkovsky, though, aesthetics was the opposite of anaesthesia. Far from legitimizing the image, the Baroque music creates a jarring stylistic dissonance that opens up a play of temporal distances. Thus, apropos of Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* (1972), Tarkovsky wrote that Bach's music 'lends a particular volume and depth to everything that occurs on screen [. . .] Thanks to Bach and the rejection of dialogue by the characters there appears in the scene a kind of vacuum, an empty space, where the spectator feels the possibility of filling the spiritual emptiness and feeling the breath of an ideal.'[2] It is not just that the images are estranged from their customary context and made palpable anew. Within the turning of the narrative they cease to be merely

The hands of Kris and Hari (*Solaris*).

commemorative and are imbued with a poignant but fragile curve of possibility – the source, perhaps, of the wistfulness that confounded the powers that be.

The complex role of Bach's music was evident in *Solaris*, in the course of which the music itself is gradually deformed by Eduard Artem'ev's electronic elaborations. The play of familiarity and distortion, as well as of venerable age and jarring novelty, augments the indeterminacies of the narrative and visual representation. In an earlier variant of the final scene, Snaut plays Bach from a metallic disk: 'suddenly Kris was overcome with the smell of the earth and moist earthly plants, and female hands covered in the juice of earthly fruits'.[3] Kris leans over to touch this newly revealed material and organic world and finds himself walking towards his father's home. However, he stops when he sees his double walk along a dusty path amongst the trees, approach his seated father and hug his 'desiccated, elderly legs': 'Observing this scene through the window, Kris wondered with horror what he would feel if his father began to speak'.[4] The screenplay ends with relatively greater clarity than in the film: the two Krises remain separate, one discussing philosophy with Snaut, the other reconciled with the father. However, Kris's fear of his father speaking highlights the fragility of the scene: as with Hari (and with Hamlet), once the ghost addresses you it ceases to be a mere ghost.

The effect of sound in Tarkovsky's films is therefore not to render the image emotionally or intellectually transparent, but to intensify its density and opacity to the point that it begins to exert an almost material resistance. Things and their sounds are de-synchronized just enough to cast their sensory existence as a question of doubt, desire and faith. As Deleuze has written about Godard, 'Man is in the world as if in a pure optical and sound situation. [. . .] Only belief in the world can reconnect man to what he sees and hears. The cinema must film, not the world, but belief in this world, our only link.'[5]

The linkage between faith and material texture is at the centre of *Stalker*, the starkest and purest example of Tarkovsky's cinematic œuvre and the film that was closest to being 'the optimal incarnation of [his original] idea', where 'conception (*zamysel*) closely matched the result'.[6] A major factor in its exceptional status was Tarkovsky's increasing solitude, especially following the defection of Vadim Iusov from his regular team. The 'ascetic' plot of *Stalker* was a central part of a conscious strategy to focus attention almost wholly on the image itself and avoid 'entertaining or surprising the spectator'.[7] In public forums of

ever-increasing frequency, Tarkovsky stressed more than ever before or ever again the need for film to affect viewers 'emotionally and sensuously', without them 'trying to analyse what is happening right now on screen', which 'only hinders the perception of the picture'.[8] If you fail to treat the film 'immediately', Tarkovsky said, you run the risk of letting it slip like sand 'between your fingers'.[9] This sat poorly with Tarkovsky's studio, for which sensorial immediacy suggested a 'lack of determinacy [that] forces the reader and the possible viewer to guess and indulge in the most diverse interpretations, which distracts from following and correctly understanding the work's meaning'.[10]

Indeed, if the temptation to interpret arises at all, Tarkovsky suggested, it should be fully satisfied by the characters' discussion at the end of their journey. 'In *Stalker*,' he wrote, 'everything must be spoken in full: human love is the very miracle that is capable of withstanding any dry theorising about the hopelessness of the world.'[11] In case viewers still missed this 'point', Tarkovsky repeated it tirelessly:

> This is a film about the fact that force means nothing in the end, and that weakness sometimes expresses the sense of a powerful soul. It's about the way that, in our daily pursuit of the material realization of our life, we lose spirituality; about the fact that we are morally unprepared for the technological 'progress' that accompanies our life and which hardly depends on our will any more.[12]

Stalker, in short, rivets spectators' attention to the screen in an attempt to restore faith in the world, not as part of a grand imaginary project, but in its 'pseudo-mundane' materiality. The harsh aesthetic texture of *Stalker* ensures that this is no romantic return to innocence; but how, then, should one understand Tarkovsky's concluding statement about the film, that in the final analysis it is also about 'the fact that, without faith in fairy-tales and miracles a human being is incapable of living and, furthermore, of being called human'? Does this not imply that, just as the Stalker's mission may turn out to be a wild-goose chase, Tarkovsky is using film to induce a state of faith without himself believing?

Tarkovsky's aesthetic principle was to seek the maximum effect with the minimum of means: 'The image must be truthful and optimally simple. This is not a goal in itself, but is a necessary condition for conveying to

The hand in the flame (*Mirror*).

the spectator the spiritual essence of what is being depicted.'[13] Tarkovsky's minimalism had important practical motivations. For instance, the decision to shoot *Andrei Rublëv* in black and white was dictated in part by the lower resolution of colour stock, especially when the 35mm frame is enlarged to 70mm for widescreen projection.[14] The use of widescreen projection became problematic after the move to colour in *Solaris*. After shooting its first colour sequences Tarkovsky reportedly said: 'you can see it's fake! I need to shoot black-and-white pictures! My next picture will be black and white and on a small screen' (OS 57). As with sculpture in the cinema, single-tone representation has somehow become for us more 'realistic', free of the conspicuous artificiality of colouration. Still, as Tarkovsky pragmatically admitted, '[s]ince colour has been invented you have to wonder how you can make use of it'.[15] Tarkovsky's solution was constantly to shift in a meticulously planned manner between black and white, sepia and colour film.

What Walter Benjamin called the percussive effect of film was for Tarkovsky not only the discontinuous staccato of frames, but also the constant alternation between types and gradations of colouration (as well as between different speeds of projection).[16] Tarkovsky's most forthright statement on the matter concerned the colour epilogue to *Andrei Rublëv*:

> Unless one is as sensitive to colour harmony as a painter, one does not notice colours in everyday life. For example, for me cinematic reality exists in the tones of black and white. Yet in *Rublëv* we had to relate life and reality on the one hand with art and painting on the other. This connection between the final colour sequence and the black-and-white film was for us a way to express the interdependence of Rublëv's art and his life. In other words: on the one hand everyday life, rational and realistically presented, and on the other – a conventionalized artistic summary of his life, its next stage, its logical continuation [ATI 24].

Tarkovsky returned to the problem in most detail in an interview recorded during his preparations for *Solaris*:

> Colour on screen is, as a rule, obnoxious and even provocative. Why? After all no one notices colour in life. [. . .] And then we shoot what we see on colour film: everything becomes colourful! And we can no longer perceive this image as reality without the colour. Colour exists everywhere in this image; it everywhere

The hand with the bird (*Mirror*).

> insinuates itself on our eye. Here there arises conventionality, which may be either artistic or anti-artistic . . .[17]

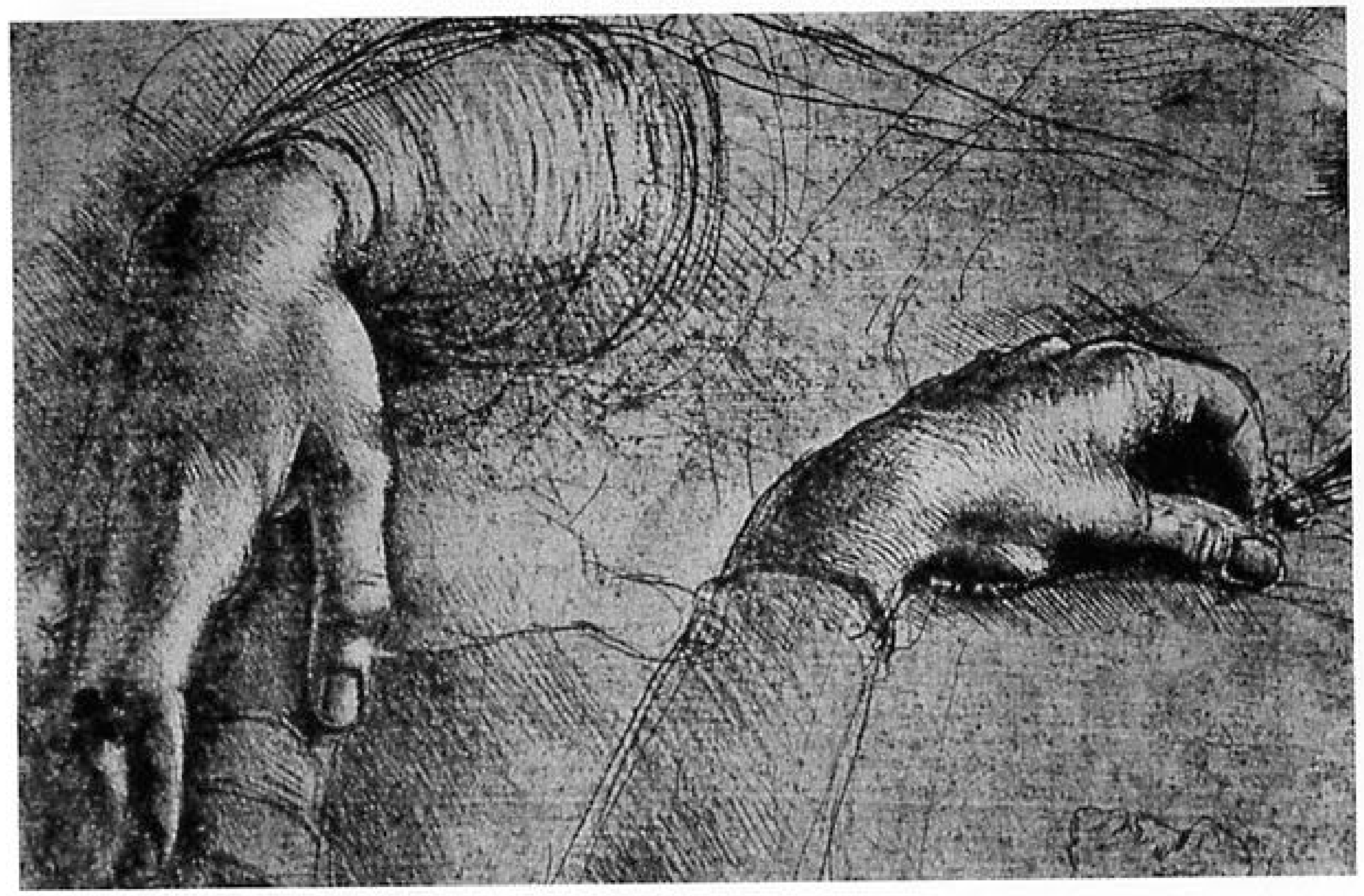
The task is not merely to de-familiarize the spectator's perception of colour by creating percussive shocks; film, Tarkovsky suggests, is capable of much more subtle variations. Using acoustic terminology, Tarkovsky claimed that it was necessary to 'mix' the colour to 'achieve the necessary measure':

> The first way is to 'eliminate colour' by means of colour. That is, to tone down the colour in every way, to seek measured, subtle and at the same time balanced spectra, to elicit greys, so that the sense of colour is no stronger or sharper than in our normal life. And there is another path which I would call psychological: to saturate the action with emotion so that the corresponding experience of this emotion is higher, sharper, stronger than the mere sense of colour. I see colour cinematography most of all as not letting colour 'occupy the foreground' or become showy.[18]

Tarkovsky noted that the only phenomena that are always perceived as colourful are sunsets and other 'transitional states of nature'.[19] To make the spectator see colour is thus to convey a transition within the represented object, corresponding to a change in texture. The textural difference between colour schemes 'expresses the specific state of matter in the film, the moment of its change in time'.[20] As in an autumn leaf, 'colour directly expresses processes concealed in the texture';[21] 'only together with texture, manifesting it', Tarkovsky added, 'can colour convey the state of what is depicted, its "history" and its "actuality", so that the viewer feels he is sensing it with his own skin'.[22] It is the paradox of Tarkovsky's art that such artful shocks to one's vision induce a new sensation of nature.

As with colour, over time Tarkovsky increasingly employed sound to punctuate and inflect the images in unexpected, complex ways. According to Owe Svensson, who worked as sound engineer on *Sacrifice*, Tarkovsky made it clear that 'his focus is always on the picture, while the sound comes later'.[23] What in Soviet cinema was merely the standard practice of dubbing in all dialogue and sound in post-production, for Tarkovsky was a conscious poetics of de-synchronization, by which he sought to

Leonardo, drawing of hands (detail, 1480s).



undermine the fixed meanings that accompany the image: 'One has only to take away the sounds of the world that is reflected by the screen or fill this world with incidental sounds that do not exist for this precise image, or which are deformed so as not to correspond to this image, and the film will immediately find full voice' (*ST* 169; *ZV* 279). The cumulative effect of this complex synchronization is to create images that resist interpretative penetration, mimicking the impenetrability of material form.

The best illustration of Tarkovsky's aural aesthetics is his little-known 1965 radio production of William Faulkner's story 'Turnabout' (1932).[24] Faulkner (like Hemingway) was officially endorsed in the USSR thanks to his Nobel Prize and politics; his story 'Turnabout' had become widely known after its first Soviet publication in 1960; its narrative – concerning a reckless but courageous young pilot of a torpedo boat – is somewhat reminiscent of *Ivan's Childhood* and the final episode in *Andrei Rublëv*.[25] Tarkovsky engaged his regular composer Viacheslav Ovchinnikov to compose and conduct the musical interludes. He was assisted by Aleksandr Misharin, a radio editor with whom he later co-authored the screenplay to *Mirror* (among other texts). The actors included future director Nikita Mikhalkov, the younger brother of Andron Konchalovsky. Tarkovsky was aided in his staging by his father's experience writing and staging the radio-dramas *Glass* and *Tale about Sphagnum* in the early 1930s.

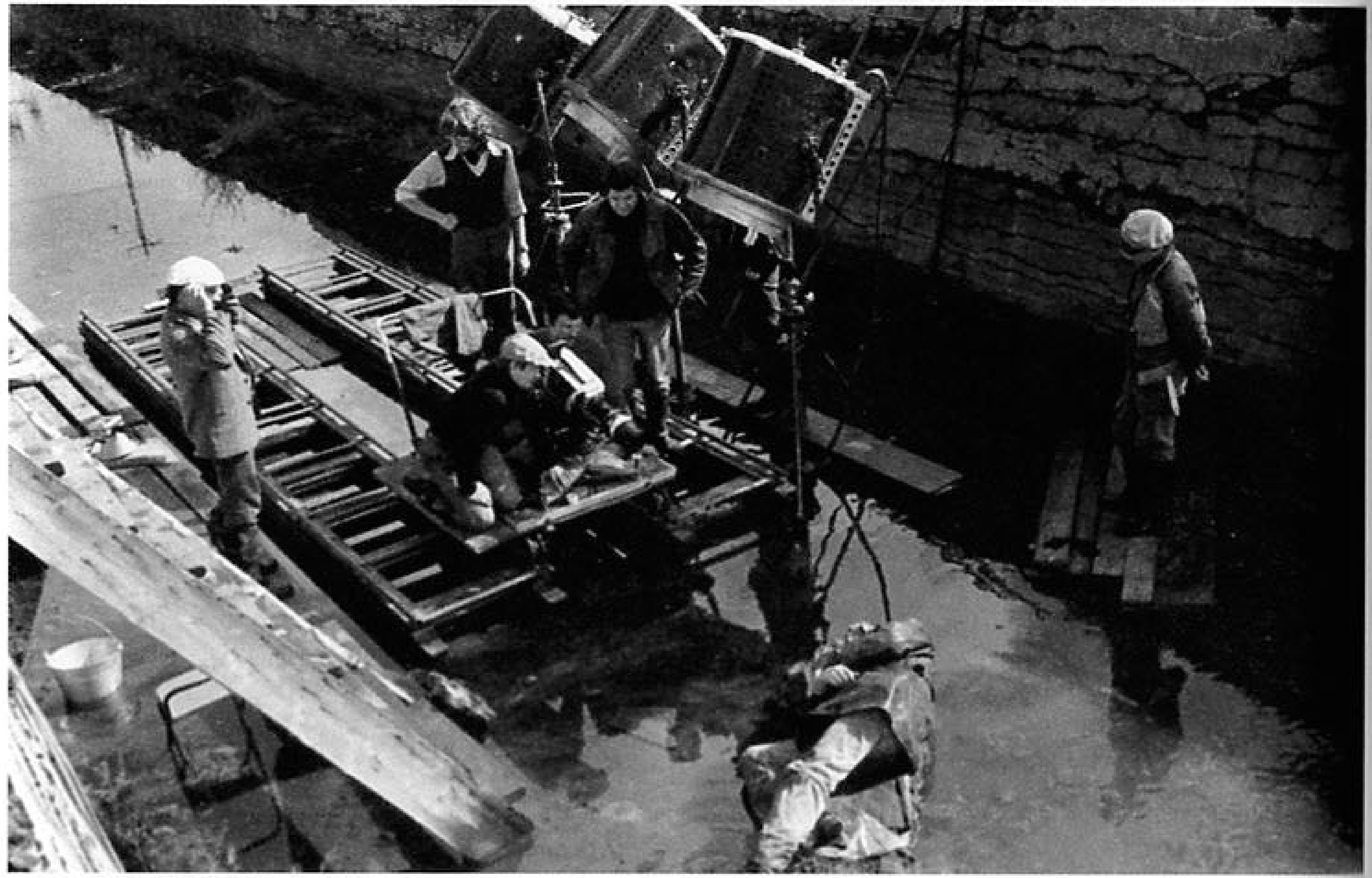
Tarkovsky's dramatization pursues the acoustic equivalent of his polycentric and shifting framing in the cinema. The foreground narration and conversation is accompanied by rival tracks – trucks on the street, chansons in the bar – which gradually overtake the foreground at various points, embedding the main characters in a larger and somewhat unruly world. Moreover, in Aleksandr Sherel's words, 'The entire sound texture was recorded with striking precision, unusual for radio directors in the time.'[26] After reviewing all the sound effects available to him, Tarkovsky set off to record seagulls and ships in the Riga port with a portable tape recorder of professional quality. Sherel counts eight distinct tracks of sound, so that in the battle scene one can hear even the sound of the empty shell casings falling to the deck of the boat. The loss of consciousness by the first-person narrator in the midst of battle was originally depicted by a silence lasting 30 seconds. This technique was so unusual that it was thought to be a mistake, and Tarkovsky was compelled to fill it with the low roar of timpani. Sherel admits that with its high acoustic resolution Tarkovsky's production would probably have lost much of its effect over normal transistor radios.

Tarkovsky's emphasis on texture culminated in his declaration that 'Theoretically there should be no music at all in a film unless it is part of the aural reality imprinted in the shot' (UR 55). By 1967 Tarkovsky had clearly tired of Viacheslav Ovchinnikov's luscious orchestral scores, complaining that 'Ovchinnikov must be held in check or else he'll write not a soundtrack but a talented opera'.[27] Beginning with *Solaris*, Tarkovsky engaged Eduard Artem'ev, who worked mainly in electronic music, which he added to recordings of classical, mainly Baroque music. With *Solaris*, Tarkovsky began to conceive of his soundtracks as an integration of music and diegetic sound, including (post-synchronized) dialogue and (de-synchronized) sound effects, resulting in a growing complexity of synchronizations between sound and image. In *Stalker*, Artem'ev's last film for Tarkovsky, the three orders of sound began to blend to the degree of indistinction. As if in the folds of the visual rhythms, Andrea Truppin observes, 'a sound will fade in very gradually, often remaining at the border of audibility for so long that, as we begin to perceive it, we first question if we have in fact heard anything and then wonder how long we have been hearing it'.[28]

As in so many other regards, *Stalker* marks the extreme point of asceticism and sensuality; the music is often indistinguishable from diegetic noise, even when strains of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony emerge in the finale. This complex synchronization works together with the folded space of the Zone to make the film an opaque medium that resists our understanding with an almost material force, using the image to renew the spectator's somatic experience. Faced with the need to define this film-form, at once aural and visual, intellectual and of the body, Tarkovsky turns to the concept of time: 'film as a form is closest to a musical construction of material. What's most important here is not the logic of the flow of events, but the form of the flow of these events, the form of their existence in the cinematic material. [. . .] Time is already form' (UR 26).

In his final two films Tarkovsky utilized pre-recorded music (mainly Baroque and folk songs), shifting the emphasis from the music itself to its diegetic source. Thus in *Nostalghia* Beethoven's Ninth Symphony blares with high distortion from Domenico's tape recorder, while in *Sacrifice* the ethereal strains of apparently non-diegetic Japanese music unexpectedly become localized in space when Alexander shuts off his (hitherto unseen) stereo system. Here music is present only to make palpable its disappearance. Tarkovsky's final film saw significant changes to the soundtrack. Owe Svensson, the sound engineer on *Sacrifice*, has expressed horror at the low quality of sound effects in Tarkovsky's Soviet films and *Nostalghia*. It is disconcerting when, for example, Kris's steps through the spacecraft resound like high-heels on parquet, as do Gorchakov's brogue-clad feet on the cobblestones of Rome. One can never quite be sure, though, that the monotonous sound of footsteps was not intended to be ostentatiously expressive, as Tarkovsky found it to be in Bergman (ST 162; ZV 279). In *Sacrifice* Svensson saw to it that 'no two footsteps would sound alike and they should have a life of their own'. Still, the basic principle of complex synchronization remained the same, so that the soundtrack to Alexander's dream 'is heard as a combination of woman's voice, the Japanese flute and various ship sounds'. Sound – whether voice, instrument or environment – is used to expand the temporal and spatial placement of the image, dissolving any specific denotations in the atmosphere that surrounds it.

As Tarkovsky's first film in colour and without an orchestral score, *Solaris* is especially useful for investigating his sensorial poetics. The first key sequence is the 'city of the future', which was shot in Tokyo in 1971 with both black-and-white and colour film and which was accompanied by a particularly dissonant piece of Artem'ev's music. According to Iusov,



Stalker: location shot by Grigoriy Verkhovskiy.

Tarkovsky did not have a predetermined plan for how he would use the footage. In the event, he strung together a repetitive series of shots on the same stretch of road, gradually increasing the proportion of colour to black and white. In some cases, a nocturnal shot first appears black and white, and is revealed as colour only by the colourful glow of city lights. The growing visual intensity is matched by Artem'ev's electronic noise, which rises out of grating noise to cacophonic beauty. When Iusov first saw the edited sequence he felt that its point was to show how the increasing quantity becomes a change in 'quality'; the viewer emerges from the cinematic tunnel with transformed powers of vision.

The 'city of the future' suddenly breaks off to a black-and-white sequence, beginning with a shot of Kelvin's home. Kelvin burns his archive in a bonfire, as his father and aunt look on; he asks permission to take with him the 'film with the bonfire', as if he wishes his family memories to include only those tinged by this act of renunciation. Colour is restored in a shot of the starry sky, with the yellow lights of a spaceship approaching the spectator. Kris asks 'When is lift-off?' and is told: 'You are already flying.' Improbable as it is that one would fail to notice being launched into space, it illustrates the fact that, in Tarkovsky, subtle changes to the quality of the image can convey more information than the dialogue or narrative.

The second reversion to black and white occurs when Kelvin views Gibarian's suicide video for the second time, now in his own cabin. First we see the black-and-white video framed by its screen within a colour room, but an axial cut reveals a black-and-white shot of Kris watching, and further shots of the video take up the entire frame, so that Kris and Gibarian are now united in the same black-and-white space. When (in the video) Sartorius knocks at Gibarian's door Kris turns his head, confusing the tape with reality. (This confusion is consistent with Lem's novel, where Gibarian appears to Kris in a dream or as a solarian spectre.) Kris then lies on the bed and views himself in the mirror; the image reverts to colour to show first Hari's face in deep shadow, and then Kris's outstretched hand. While the initial change to black and white appears to mark Kris's transition from the real space of the spacecraft to the imaginary space of Gibarian's video, the change back to colour marks if anything a deepening of the imaginary and the loss of any decisive criterion of reality.

The third black-and-white sequence follows Kris's delirium, when he dreams (?) of his home and his deceased mother, who rinses off his arm with water from a pristine white porcelain jug and basin. Kris seems to be falling into infantilism; he calls out 'Mama, mama'. The black and white carries over into the next shot, when Kris awakes and calls for Hari, who (he learns from Snaut) has been 'annihilated'. By this point, having served its purpose of informing the images with memory and hope, the narrative is completely suspended (for the viewer as for Kris). It has become less important (or possible) to distinguish reality from imagination than to manage the various levels of memory and fantasy.

The remainder of the film is thus the multiplication and ordering of these layers of images. Bruegel's paintings on board the spacecraft are echoed in Kris's colour film of family memories, which itself is reproduced as a full-screen image that blurs the boundaries between *Solaris* and its film-within-a-film. As Tatiana Egorova has pointed out, Bach's Chorale Prelude in F 'not only awakes nostalgic images in Kelvin's consciousness, it also miraculously influences the state of the inanimate phantom Hari', who 'suddenly begins to "recollect" her human past', as the soundtrack expands to include noises of the forest, a folk chorus, and the chimes of bells.[29] After seeing her prototype on film and hearing its soundtrack, Hari-2 walks to a mirror, exclaims 'I don't know myself at all', and then begins to talk to Kris through the mirror, as the camera shifts right to show a stream of water. If one stopped here one might be able to sort out how these images, their implied narratives and their media inform each other. However, the film refuses to stop; at the shot of running water the soundtrack changes to an excerpt from Ovchinnikov's soundtrack to *Andrei Rublëv* and Kris is shown alongside a reproduction of Rublëv's *Trinity*. This weaves the characters' imaginaries and narratives together with that of their extra-diegetic creator. This moment of convergence – between different temporalities and different levels of representation – extends the possibility both of redemption and of damnation. Is Kris (and by extension Tarkovsky) forever condemned to replay the past, locked within his representations of it (whether in memory, dream or technical media)? Does his love for Hari return him to a fluid state (symbolized by the water) where memory is indistinguishable from perception?

In the end the film equivocates; in his single most important line Kris wonders:

> Do I have the right to refuse even the imaginary possibility of contact with this Ocean, to which my race has for decades tried to extend a thread of understanding, and remain here among the things and objects which we both [i.e., Kris and Hari] touched, which still remember our breath. In the name of what? For the sake of my hope for her return? But I have no such hope. All that remains for me is to wait. For what? I don't know. New miracles?

This monologue echoes nothing as much as the ending of Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*, and its thrust seems to be much the same: between our intuitions of a transcendent source (i.e., the Ocean) and the insecurity of corporeal life we erect systems of representation – threads of understanding – which never form themselves into a clear design, yet comprise the very fabric that weds consciousness to corporeality.

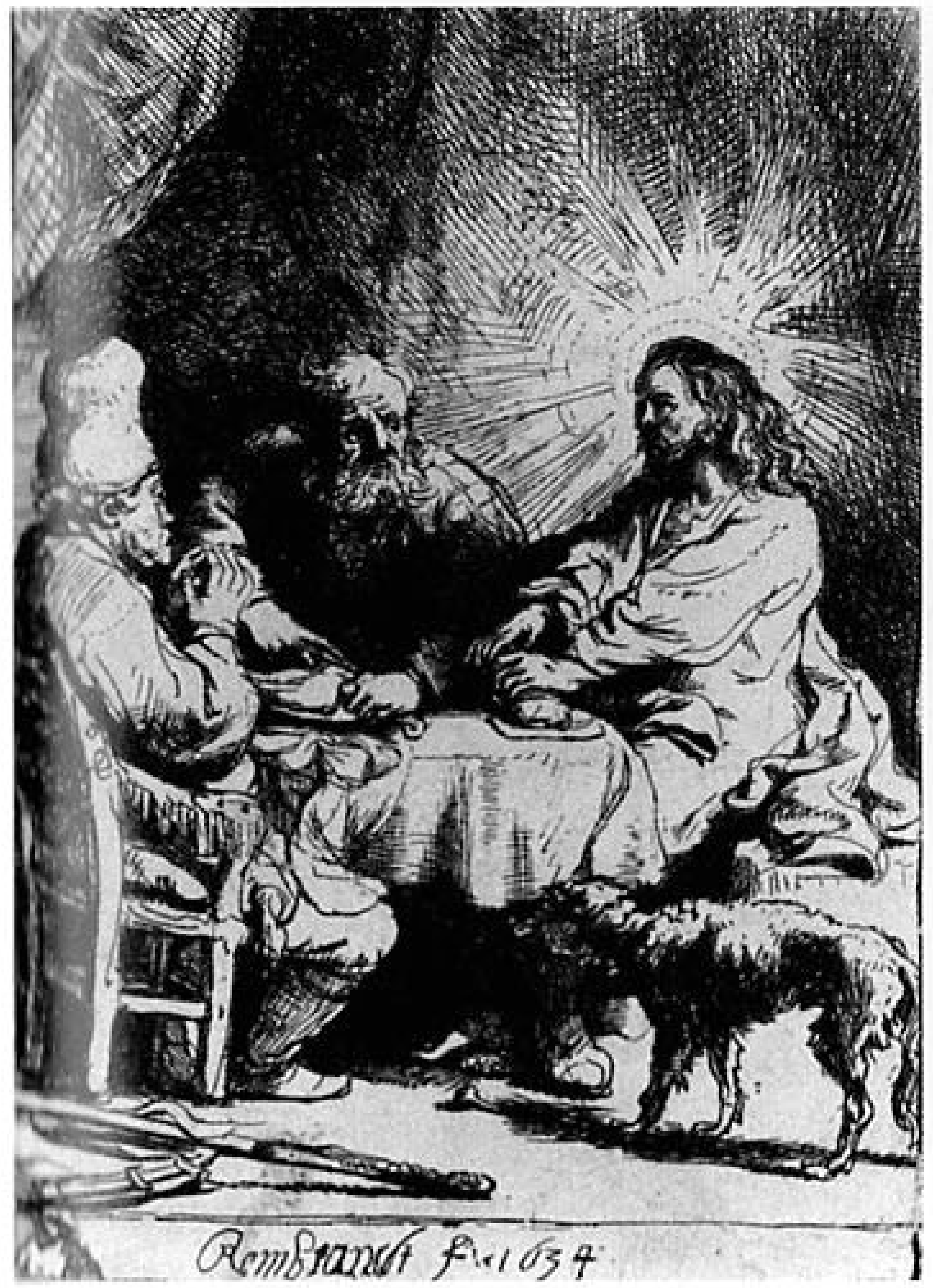
'I like making long films, films which utterly "destroy" the spectator in a physical manner', Tarkovsky once said.[30] In order to exert such effect, however, temporal form requires at least a skeleton of narrative, which in *Stalker* is not only reduced to the barest minimum, but at key moments threatens to come completely apart. The physical evidence for the Zone and of the Room of Desires is almost entirely circumstantial: the closed

perimeter, the rumours of miracles and the flags by which the Stalker marks out a path. In comments on the film Tarkovsky stressed that the story of Porcupine, the Stalker's mentor, could be a mere legend (ST 198; ZV 317); perhaps the Porcupine is really the Stalker himself. In sum, Tarkovsky professed: 'It would be good if at the end the spectator came to doubt whether he had even seen a story' (OS 247). It is almost as if the Stalker is conducting an apocalyptic variation of a children's game, like hide-and-seek or 'capture the flag'. The only evidence of supernatural forces, that is of otherwise unsolvable diegetic puzzles, are the voice which calls the Writer back from his solo foray and the bird which disappears over the sand dunes. Both are cinematic tricks that, if anything, detract from the sense of mystery; the three characters accuse each other of ventriloquism, but the viewer is acutely aware of the director's manipulation. The general state of discomfiture and unease is maintained mostly by the smoothly floating camera, the alternations in colour, the conspicuous sound effects and their synthesized elaboration. The ringing telephone and working fuse-box in the antechamber to the Room strike the characters and spectators as uncanny precisely because they so evidently contradict the pretence of the Zone. The Professor discards his device, not because he loses faith in the Zone, but because he comes to believe in it more than in his own judgement.

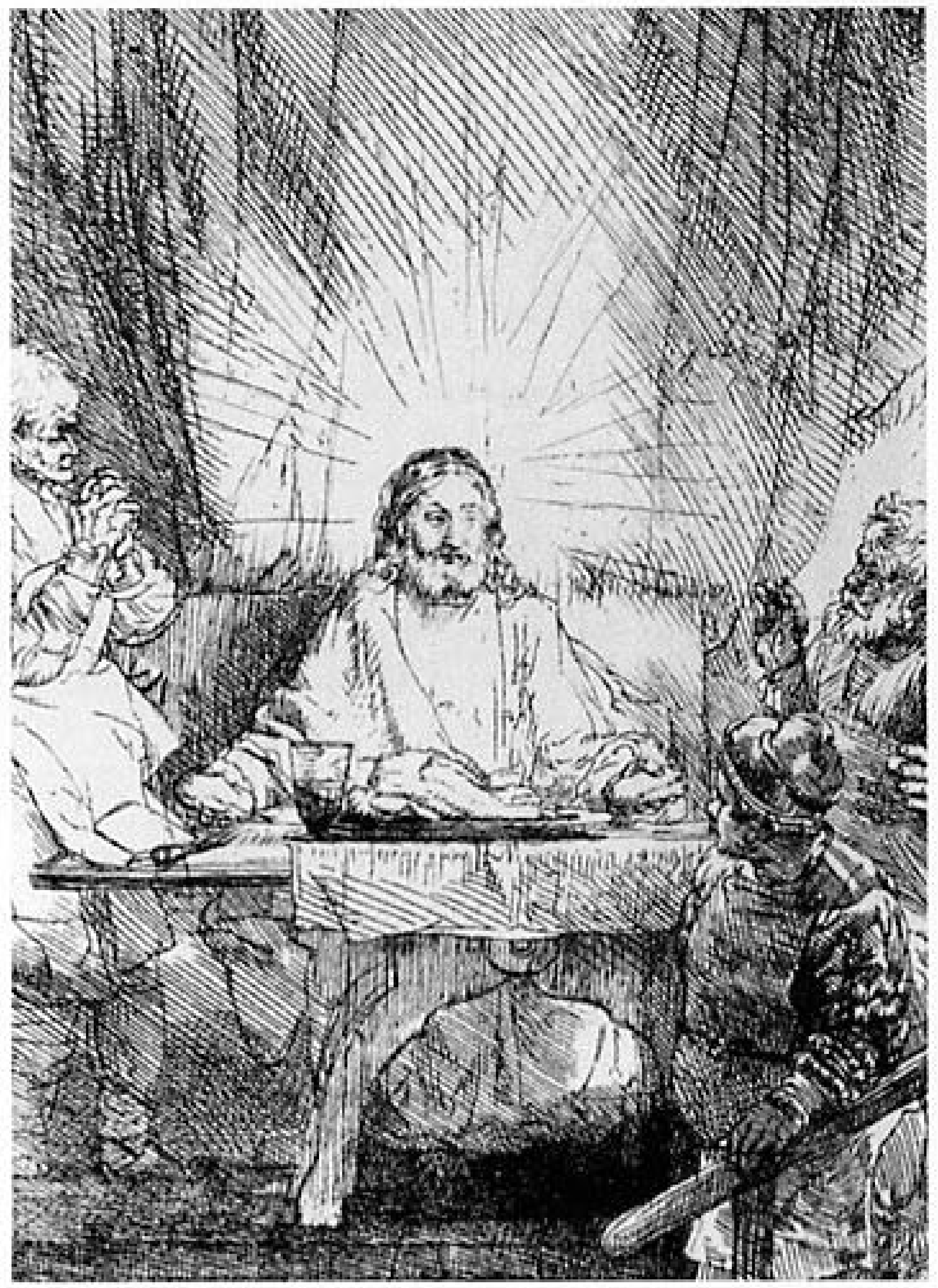
The fragility of the border between realism and fantasy is perhaps most puzzling in the episode of the 'Dry Tunnel' – a joke, as the Stalker remarks, because it is in fact a violent current of water. The beginning of the second part finds the Stalker raising his two clients from their rest; the Professor leaves his rucksack, not realizing that it is impossible to return, but upon remembering it he goes back all the same. The Stalker and the Writer press on, wading through the water and despairing of ever finding the Professor again; after all, as the Stalker keeps repeating, no one ever returns the same way they came. However, the Stalker and the Writer emerge from the Dry Tunnel only to meet the Professor enjoying a quiet snack near the very place they left him. The Stalker treats this fold in space as a 'trap' and their survival as proof of the Professor's benevolence, but it is difficult to rid oneself of the suspicion that he was actually leading the Writer, so to speak, up the garden path. The Stalker's strictures are improvised, not to protect his visitors from unknown dangers, but solely to stamp his authority on their quest. The sequence is reminiscent of one at the beginning of Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, when lost travellers in the fog pass the same distinctive tree three times: 'What would seem simpler than placing the camera and thrice-over showing the circular path of the characters?' (*ST* 110; *ZV* 219). Yet the sequence is not just a visual display of futility. With each arrival at the spot of origination the soundtrack registers clear changes; the sound of falling water is suddenly and inexplicably replaced by a more violent flow.[31] Changes in the surfaces of water are studied in interspersed shots of a barrel with filmy water, a polluted river and the waterlogged tile floor, each of which is subjected to disruption and analysis. The fold in space is a watery lens, gradually bringing into focus the studied image of three men in search of themselves. The Writer helpfully cites the analogy of St Peter: the illusion of walking on the water is sustainable as long as faith lasts.

Other scriptural references are forthcoming when the Stalker's wife (in voice-over) recites the Revelation of St John the Divine and the Stalker reads verses concerning the occurrence on the road to Emmaus from St Luke's Gospel. Three days after the Crucifixion two disciples are on their way to Emmaus when Christ joins them unrecognized and asks the reason for their sadness. They answer by briefly relating the story of Christ's betrayal, death and resurrection. Christ admonishes them for their lack of understanding but stays with them to break bread, whereupon the disciples recognize him and he disappears: 'They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"' (Luke 34: 22). It would be simplistic to say that the Stalker is posing as Christ; after all, it is the Professor who breaks bread (in the form of his sandwiches) and the Writer who dons a crown of thorns. The link has much more to do with the impossibility of sharing space with the resurrected body, which requires not vision but faith.

This may sound like a 'lugubrious religious fable',[32] but it has direct bearing on the work's sensorial effect. Salvation from the Dry Tunnel includes a colour shot of the tiled floor covered by a film of dirty water. These shots continue in sepia in the ensuing scene of rest. The objects glimpsed range from a bottle and syringes to a gun, coins, pages from a calendar and John the Baptist from Jan van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece. The soft flow of the water contrasts with the objects below and the human figures above; moreover, reflections from the water and submerged objects are indistinguishable from refractions and surface pollution. The heaving swamp with swirls of airborne matter causes one to wonder about the role of the camera in producing these effects. True,



Rembrandt, *Christ at Emmaus* (1634).



Rembrandt, *The Road to Emmaus* (1665).

the images are accompanied by the Stalker's wife reciting from St John's Revelation. However, the images stress that the three men's journey through the elements has culminated in nothing other than a new vision of the earth through the water. It is also at this moment that a dog appears and begins to follow the three men. Whence the dog? Perhaps from Rembrandt's etchings of the supper held at Emmaus? At the end of the sequence the river is shown again, now apparently free of its film of pollution; however, we are now aware of the water as a medium.

The study of watery and underwater surfaces does not feature in the screenplay. This sequence appears to be the vestige of a vision that the three men witness before reaching the Room (it first appeared in the second full version):

> An entire world opened up before them; a strange, half-familiar world. At their feet was the calm surface of a lake or a pond. On the low bank, on soft grass, sat a young woman, her feet gathered under her, her head lowered, long hair almost touching the water hiding her face. Behind her back were rolling green hills under an

The Stalker's dog (*Stalker*).

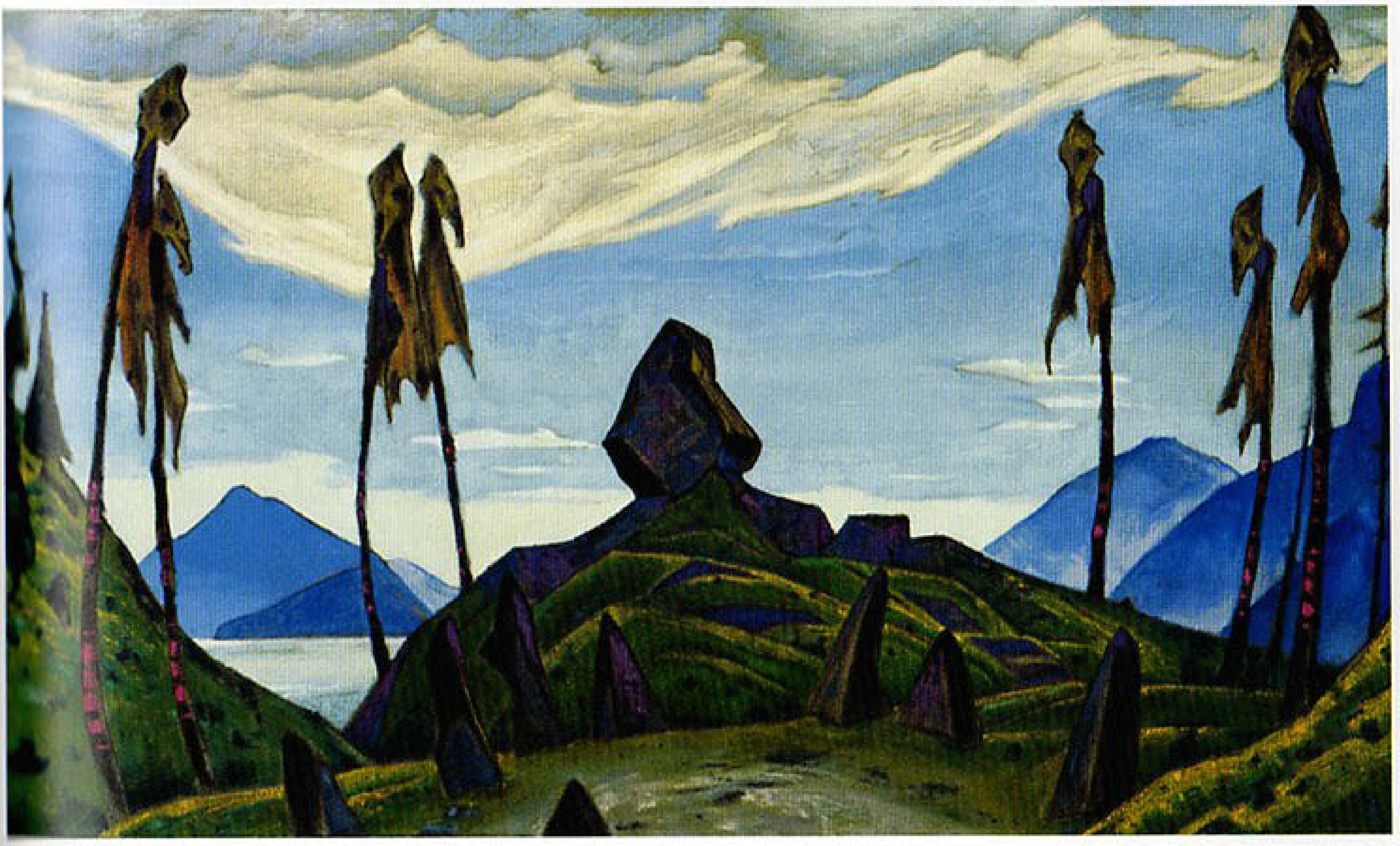
> unusually radiant azure sky, in the distance the dark-green wall of the forest. On the top of the nearest hill there stands crookedly a pole with a bull's skull placed on top. Under the pole there sits an old and snow-white man, with feet in bast shoes extended on the grass, his face almost black like an old, water-seasoned oak, his eyes under fluffy white brows look blind, his crooked hands calmly resting on his knees.
>
> And beneath the old man there sits on a rock a half-naked curly-haired boy playing on a flute. One sees how his rosy cheeks inflate and exhale, how his fingers skilfully run over the openings in his pipe. At the boy's feet a huge bear sleeps, and another one nearby lazily licks its fore paw. Over the rushes that frame part of the pond the dragon-flies shimmer with their blue wings.
>
> 'Roerich', the Professor calmly says. 'Roerich the elder. Very beautiful.'
>
> The Conductor [i.e., Stalker] casts a quick glance at him and turns his face to the Writer, who, thrusting forwards and not turning around, with open mouth and wonder takes in this weird picture.
>
> Then he turns to the Conductor; his eyes are crazy.
>
> 'What is it?' he asks. 'Where is it?'

> The Conductor spits.
>
> 'The devil only knows', he says, 'whether it's somewhere or somewhen.'
>
> 'Have you seen it before?'
>
> 'This I've seen. But the pictures are always different. . .[33]

In the screenplay the vision ends when the Professor throws a log into the water, spreading circles over its surface and melting away the mists of the vision. In *Stalker* the scene was completely dissolved in the film's murky fluids – from the beer in the bar to the glasses in the finale – all of which emphasize the opacity of the very medium of vision through which this story, this vision, is being presented.

At the beginning of their path the Stalker remarks that the Zone is by definition a silent place. It follows that all of the sounds in the film are traces of some alien will reacting to the intervention of the three men. It is not so much that the unexpected and unusual sounds of the Zone 'convey a sense of heterogeneous worlds existing simultaneously, but not necessarily interacting';[34] instead, they allow the spectator to dissect discrete components of experience, which is always an encounter between contrary forces. By 'refusing to announce the manner in which

The mention of Roerich in the screenplay suggests a similarity between the scene and the work of artist Nikolai Roerich, as exemplified here in his *Le Sacré du printemps* (1929–30).



a sound should be read', Tarkovsky is able to represent the strange alienation of human experience within a space crossed by alien wills.

It is, of course, unlikely that the Stalker's entire quest is intended to be seen as a mere sham. For Soviet audiences the ordeal of the three men would have echoed cinematic and literary accounts of the Battle of Stalingrad, where soldiers stalked through ruins, crawling over the dust of bombed-out buildings, only to be confronted by incongruous reminders of the civilization that reigned there so recently, such as ringing telephones (for instance, Vasilii Grossman's *Life and Fate*, part 2, chapter 24). However, in the final analysis it would seem unimportant whether one is 'supposed' to believe in the Room of Desires or not; what is important is the performance of the act of faith, which culminates in the miracle in the finale of the film, when the Stalker's daughter telekinetically moves three glasses across a table, dropping the final one over the edge. How is this to be taken? At the beginning of the film (as in *Sacrifice*) a vibrating glass registers the invisible tremors that invade the home. At the end of the film the glass registers the invisible power within the home, one that appears more hostile than protective, given the girl's malevolent smashing of the glass. However, the open finale underscores that the film is less about the power of the human spirit, and certainly not the impending (ecological, political, moral, religious, etc.) crisis, but rather about the encounter between human subjects and their hostile world as it is registered and mediated by the cinematic apparatus, an opaque if ultimately revelatory medium. The promise of meaningfulness in the film (as in the Zone) is no Pascalian wager on the existence of a supernatural realm; the wager is on the physical (and therefore spiritual) receptivity of the spectator.

8 Time

In *Steamroller and Violin* the music stops as soon as the teacher sets the metronome: art eludes precise calculation, Tarkovsky seems to say. Yet on his sets Tarkovsky was renowned for playing the role of the metronome, counting out for his bemused actors the duration of an action or position. It was only when the metronome ceased – when the director ceded control – that the exact orchestration of movement came alive as 'imprinted time', sometimes surprising even the actors with the precision of the director's conception.

The idea of the 'conception' (*zamysel*) occurs frequently in Tarkovsky's texts and interviews. The 'author's work', he noted, 'begins with the intellectual conception, the need to tell about something important' (ST 76; ZV 179). According to his diary (3 July 1975), the unrealized screenplay 'Hoffmanniana' was dedicated to exploring 'how the idea of a work matures'. He likened the director to a 'waiter who must carry a mountain of plates without breaking them' (ATI 129). He lauded Sergei Paradjanov for remaining 'free within his own conception' (TT), and dismissed directors who 'chased' after documentary authenticity to the detriment of their authorial conception (ST 78; ZV 180). And yet he also confessed that 'when I arrive at the shoot it turns out that life is so much richer than my imagination (*fantaziia*) that I have to change everything' (ATI 133). He saw this interplay as the source of spiritual meaning in art: '[The work] overcomes its own thought, which is insignificant before the image of the world that it sketches and which we perceive as a revelation' (ATI 137).

The conception was not contained in the screenplay. Arkadii Strugatsky, co-screenwriter for *Stalker*, gives the following account of his collaboration with Tarkovsky ahead of the second shoot of the film:

> I don't know how he worked with his other screenwriters, but for us it was like this. I bring a new episode. We had just discussed it the day before. 'It's no good. Redo it'. 'Well tell us what to redo, what to remove, what to add!' 'I don't know. You're the screenwriter, not I, so you do it.' I redo it. I try to catch the right tone, the right conception, as I understand it [. . .] 'That's even worse. Redo it'. I sigh and crawl to the typewriter. 'Aha. This is closer. But not quite right. It seems like this phrase catches it a bit. Try to develop it'. I dimly examine 'that phrase'. A phrase like any other. In my opinion it's completely random. I could just as easily have not written it. But . . . I redo it. He reads slowly; he re-reads and his moustache perks up. Then he says indecisively: 'Well . . . All right, it'll do for now. It gives us something to start with at least . . . And now re-write this dialogue. It's like a bone stuck in my throat. Bring it into conformity to the one before and the one after'. 'Isn't it in conformity?' 'No.' 'And what don't you like in it?' 'I don't know. Redo it and get it ready for tomorrow'. That's how we worked on a screenplay that had already been accepted and approved at all levels.[1]

In Strugatsky's account Tarkovsky directly echoes Boriska, the bell-founder's son in *Andrei Rublëv*, who impertinently demands ever more silver from the exasperated prince, though he is really inventing the secret formula as he goes along.

Like Boriska, the director must allow his conception to be shaped by forces beyond his immediate control, what Tarkovsky called 'the ceaseless flow of living life that surrounds us' (OS 96):

> the conception takes form by cinematic means, that is to say, it must be formed by life itself. The conception comes alive in the film only through the most direct and immediate contact with reality. The worst and, in my view, most destructive tendency for film is to transfer one's precise mental constructions onto the screen. After all, the cinema was born as a means of capturing the very *movement* of reality in its photographically concrete uniqueness. [. . .] The authorial conception will become a living human testimony, which agitates and interests others, only when we are able to 'immerse' it in the flow of fast-retreating reality, which we imprint in the concrete palpability of each represented instant, in its textural and emotional uniqueness [OS 108].

The conception is exactly a beginning that exposes the film to time; more precisely, it is a trap in which time can be caught. In the cinema 'we contain space in order to create the illusion of time' (UR 53). The screenplay and the set were just such traps; Nikolai Dvigubsky's set for *Mirror*, Tarkovsky said, was 'an apartment in which time itself lived' (UR 52).

Tarkovsky's films were mapped out in meticulous detail, a single shot sometimes requiring days of rehearsals and enforced inactivity while waiting for the right light and meteorological conditions. Ideally this extensive planning would culminate in a single, unique take. Noting that it took three takes to complete the final shot of *Mirror* (20 metres of film), Tarkovsky exclaimed: 'Terrible! I must only shoot one take of each shot' (MG 113). To be sure, there were practical reasons to minimize the number of takes, for instance to economize on valuable film-stock. However, the intended effect of Tarkovsky's meticulous preparations and preference for a single take was to create a concrete spatial and narrative matrix within which the stochastic flow of time could interfere at once randomly and meaningfully.

This approach allowed considerable freedom to the material forces and animals that were called upon not merely to be located in the shot, but to manifest themselves in activity. The bird that lands on Astaf'ev in *Mirror* is obviously manipulated, as is the bird with broken wings that the narrator tosses up at the end of the film. However, the bird that lands on the window during the press conference in *Solaris* explodes the 'realism' of an otherwise mundane scene, as do the birds that fly out of the statue of the Madonna in *Nostalghia*, at the evident risk of injury to the actress. Like *Stalker*, despite a general atmosphere of mystery in *Nostalghia* it is the behaviour of the dog that seems truly uncanny, as does the cooperation of the wind in choreographing the famous long take of Gorchakov ferrying Domenico's candle across the pool. True, not all chance was welcome; when Sven Nyquist's camera jammed in the long take of the fire at the end of *Sacrifice*, Tarkovsky had to rebuild the set at great expense in order to redo the shot correctly. He did so not to restore his precise conception, but to create a unified spatio-temporal field within which the aleatory flow of time might manifest itself.

While Tarkovsky spoke in reverent tones about the integrity of the shot, he reserved the right to undermine it through the complex intradiegetic synchronization of action, colour and sound. Shots might include heterodiegetic reference to the outside world, such as through documentary footage or when the Stalker's wife addresses the spectator.

The integrity of the shot might even be complicated by interdiegetic references to Tarkovsky's other films. Tarkovsky's use of the same actors from film to film inscribed their very faces with the memory of previous roles and narratives. This bleeding between films thickens the characters' impenetrable masks, which like the death mask of Pushkin that hangs on the wall of the spacecraft in *Solaris* seem frozen. There is a similar bleeding on the soundtracks to *Andrei Rublëv* and *Solaris*, both of which included a short passage from the preceding film: as Boriska recalls his labours one hears the theme from *Ivan's Childhood*, whereas a snippet of *Andrei Rublëv* sounds while Kelvin is framed alongside Rublëv's *Trinity*. This technique has precedents in opera; for instance, Mozart included music from *The Marriage of Figaro* in the finale of *Don Giovanni*. There, however, the music is played by an on-stage orchestra, whereas Tarkovsky destroys the narrative integrity of the image by merging it into an alien context.

These complex synchronizations reflect Tarkovsky's concern to allow the viewer to respond creatively and spontaneously to the image. Since actors cannot react to situations spontaneously, he preferred them not to react at all, at least in any visible way. As Tarkovsky once explained:

> The way I say 'I hate you' will depend not on my hatred but on who I am and how I feel at that moment, on my state of mind; now I'd say it one way, and five minutes later I'd say it differently. [. . .] But an actor will say the words one precise way, and if you wake him up in two days he'll say 'I hate you' the exact same way. Because he's playing the ideology of his character or his action, not its feeling. Ideology comes afterwards; it's the result of art and not its material structure, its flesh, its meat.[2]

Like Hari-2 in *Solaris*, Tarkovsky's films seek to become enmeshed in time by attaining memory and hope – in the spectator, by the mediation of the screen.

After *Stalker* Tarkovsky did not immediately know how to turn this culminating point into a new point of departure. He took a position at the Institute for Cinematography, lecturing future directors on the elements of cinema. He began to make frequent public appearances, where he discussed his next projects, *Nostalghia* and an adaptation of

Dostoevsky's *Idiot*, as distant desiderata: 'In principle I do not really feel like making films. Of course I will; I can't avoid it. . . But right now I don't want to. Perhaps I'm tired of the cinema'.[3] This fatigue was banished by a journey in space that gave rise to a new conception; this moment is captured in his short *Time of Travel*.

At the beginning of *Time of Travel* Tonino Guerra welcomes Tarkovsky into his house, reads him a new poem and speaks of their plan for the day. Tarkovsky begins to complain about the possible locations they have seen; a cut-away shows the two inspecting Amalfi and Lecce. It gradually emerges that Tarkovsky and Guerra have already developed a firm plan for a film; they discuss Piero della Francesca's *Madonna del Parto* and a later shot shows a folder marked 'Nostalghia'. The structure of the second part of the film hearkens back to Tarkovsky's original conception for *Mirror*, which he termed a 'questionnaire-film'; throughout the film Guerra asks rather typical questions, such as Tarkovsky's greatest influences and his advice for young filmmakers. Shots of the interview are interspersed with memories and fantasies, some of which are evidently linked to the premise of the film. The extended discussion of an ornate floor that the two men are not able to view brings up the name of a Russian princess who lived in Italy, Elena Korchakova, which is evidently the source of Gorchakov's in *Nostalghia*. The film features several long panoramas of Bagno Vignoni, one of the locations of the future film.

The film is unique in Tarkovsky's œuvre for its jarringly discontinuous montage of image and sound. After inspecting the inlaid floor of one ancient church the camera shows scenery from the window of a car driving in the country; there is a loud screech, as if before an impending accident, but the image changes to a shot of a smiling, relaxed Tarkovsky, and then to foliage and an empty cage in Guerra's back garden. As the men share a meal of seafood and pasta with unidentified men in the street the soundtrack shifts from traffic to sounds of eating and chinking bottles, and then to the steps of a child who is shown with a balloon. At times the sound cuts out completely.

Time of Travel is a moment of reflection and conception – a moment of spatial investigation – so far deprived of any duration in time. It presents the elements out of which the film will emerge, but is completely removed from the narrative and pictorial continuity that will bring them to life. Perhaps that is the point of Tarkovsky's complaints about the pretty tourist sites they have seen so far. Guerra comments

Time of Travel.

that Tarkovsky had to see all of these places in order to know how to shoot his character in neutral 'Italian' space, that is, in the flowing of 'neutral' Italian time. Indeed, Tarkovsky is heard inquiring of a bell-ringer at Bagno Vignoni whether he cooks his own food. He is seeking a conception that will withstand exposure to the concrete conditions of its realization.

Tarkovsky's concern with the conception of *Nostalghia* is evident in his contemporaneous fascination with making Polaroid snapshots, a selection of which has been published in the book *Instant Light*. The Polaroid camera allowed him to capture an instantaneous picture of visual conceptions, some of which reappear in *Time of Travel* and *Nostalghia*: a dog (German shepherd, of course) in a field, gazing dreamily off into the distance; oak trees alongside a house and groves of straight, leafless trunks; a gloomy, spiderweb-draped room illuminated by a window that frames an idyllic landscape; steam rising over Bagno Vignoni and whitened bottles strewn at its perimeter. Perhaps paradoxically, compared to the films these snapshots seem staged and mannered. The composition is too clear, the *chiaroscuro* too conspicuous. Time has not lived in them.

Before shooting *Nostalghia* Tarkovsky knew it would be a watery film. 'Water is a mysterious element', he said, 'a single molecule of which is very photogenic. It can convey movement and a sense of change and flux. There will be a lot of it in *Nostalghia*.'[4] In *Andrei Rublëv*, *Solaris* and *Mirror* water flowed over objects and as a film over the screen, as a means of aesthetic distanciation and a medium of vision: 'There is nothing more beautiful than water. There is not a single natural phenomenon that does not receive its reflection in it' (DB). In *Stalker* the water was stilled, stagnating in pools and barrels, the medium of vision itself accruing an opaque texture and depth. The water of *Nostalghia* performs all of these functions, but – in line with the increasingly dramatic and psychological character of Tarkovsky's art – it also instantiates the vague flows of desire to which Gorchakov is subject.

Cinema's singular ability to engage and manage social desire was recognized by early critics. In the USSR the cinema performed a crucial role in channelling sexual desire in constructive directions, making the revolution *attractive* in all senses of the word. In Grigorii Kozintsev's and Leonid Trauberg's *Alone* (1930), for instance, the protagonist (a young teacher) rejects her bourgeois ideal of married domesticity for a mission to bring enlightenment to a backwards tribe in the Far East. In Stalinist film sexual couplings often were unsuccessful until mediated by Stalin or his image, which served both to elicit desire and facilitate its consummation. In the broadest sense Sobchack speaks of the cinema's 'capacity to localize [. . .] the invisible, intrasubjective commutation of perception and expression and make it visible and intersubjectively available to others'.[5] In terms of the politics of sexuality and gender, this power of the cinema to intervene at the most basic levels of human community can be used in both conservative and progressive directions, both to sublimate desire into socially constructive tasks and to subvert society by its anarchic liberation.

In the West Tarkovsky's sexual politics, especially in *Nostalghia* and *Sacrifice*, have proven one of the more controversial aspects of his œuvre, meriting the epithets 'disturbing' (*ATI* xvi) and 'Neanderthal'.[6] However, *Stalker*, which directly addresses the issue in the image of the hallowed Room of Desires, complicates any such dismissal. The Stalker is the facilitator of desire, leading the two impotent guests through an obstacle course en route to instant gratification. The Writer is forthright in his admission that the fulfilment of his desire would amount to self-aggrandisement. The Professor, by contrast, plans violently to prevent the Room's radical redistribution of desire. The upshot of this entire situation – and the key to its inveterate subversiveness – is that neither gratification nor redistribution would change the economy of desire, only renunciation.

This motif is confirmed at the beginning of *Nostalghia*, which contains some of the most misogynistic lines in Tarkovsky's œuvre. Gorchakov has requested that his flamboyantly elegant Italian interpreter Eugenia take him to the church where Piero della Francesca's *Madonna del Parto* ('Our Lady of Childbirth') is displayed. In the church Eugenia encounters a simple yet sinister sacristan, who pointedly contrasts her appearance to that of the female participants in a mysterious fertility rite. The scene fits a larger pattern in the film of opposing the liberated sexuality of modern Italy to the more traditional ways of Gorchakov's Russian home. Since Gorchakov stands in for Tarkovsky (after all, he reads the elder Tarkovsky's poems), it is assumed that the 'point' is to put women back in their place.

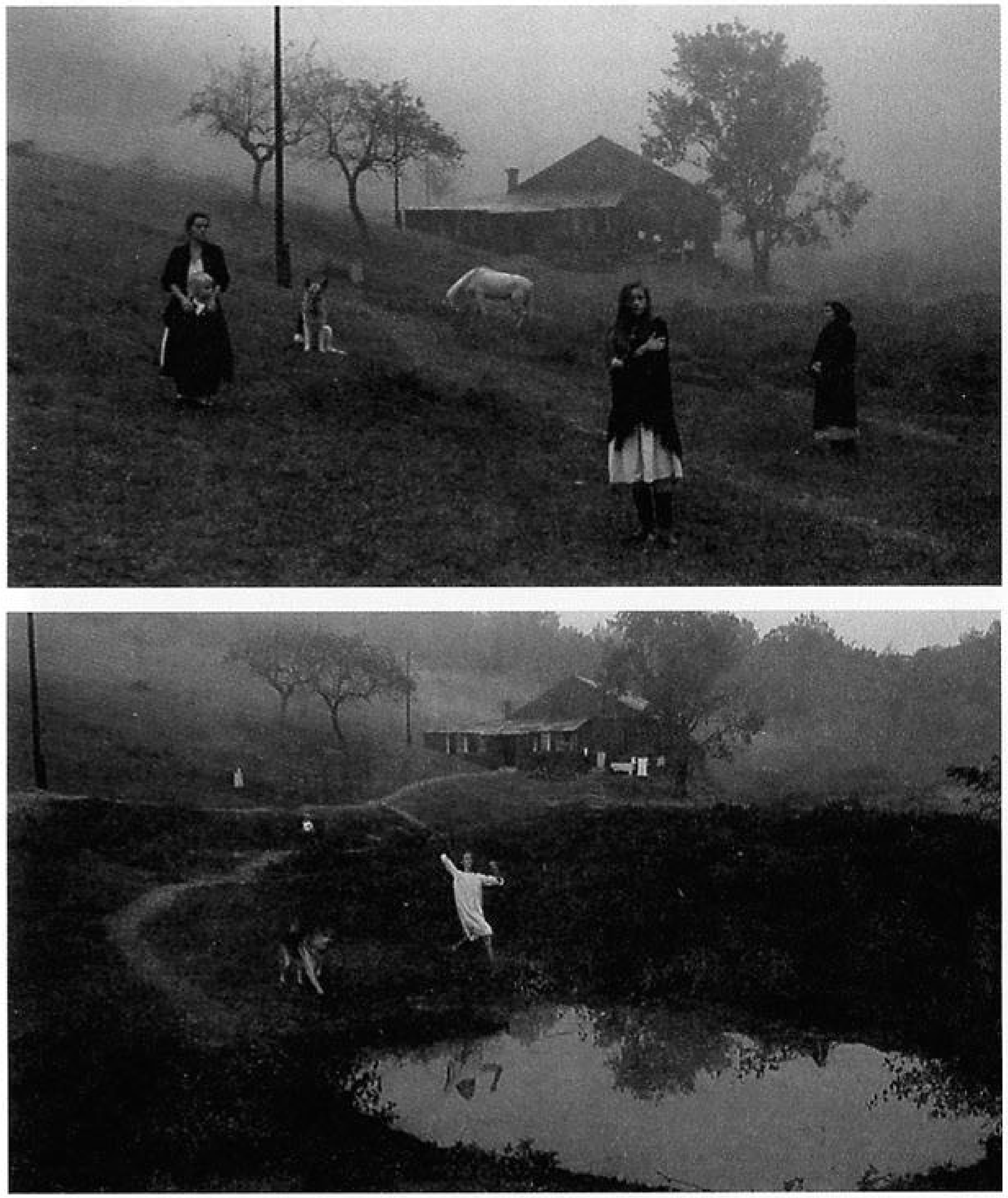
But Gorchakov, of course, is not only silent; he never even enters the church, moaning that he is sick of Italy's beautiful sites. It is not that Gorchakov prefers looking at the *Madonna* or the simple supplicant women than at Eugenia; he has become uncomfortable with the very act of looking. On this point, it is true, Gorchakov seems allied with the sacristan, who tells Eugenia that casual onlookers like herself prevent the ritual from being effective for the believing supplicants. When Eugenia asks what the ritual is supposed to achieve, she is told 'Anything you like'. As in *Stalker*, faith brings its own reward; but this does not necessarily mean that the film, like ritual, requires self-requiting faith.

Renunciation might itself be seen as a retrograde notion, not only because it suggests monasticism, but also because it abdicates active responsibility; after all, we can renounce only what we are offered by others. In this case, the spectator can resist the urge to interpret in order to allow the film to place him or her at the confluence of specific attractions, desires and promises. Moreover, by renouncing one's individual interpretive prerogative one is placed in a common space that can become the site of community. However, all of this can occur only if an exclusive privilege of vision is accorded to the filmmaker, who shows us something to believe in.

Gorchakov's dilemma is different: in his refusal to look he becomes imprisoned in his memories and fantasies. In the second scene of *Nostalghia* Eugenia and Gorchakov sit in a dusky hotel lobby discussing the impossibility of translating poetry; the camera settles on the back of Gorchakov's head, but at the sound of running water he turns to look into the camera; we see a glimpse of Gorchakov's wife at their country home, then Eugenia sweeping her hair, and then a fussy lady walking her dog down the hotel hallway. At the end of the scene, again to the sound of flowing water, Gorchakov once more approaches the camera and the image switches back to that of his Russian home, even as Eugenia's conversation with the hotel proprietor continues on the soundtrack. The water suggests a welling-up of desire, as do Eugenia's flowing hair and garments and the fluid camera, which allows the tension between the two characters to accrue without distraction. Just as he rejects the possibility of literary translation and the very figure of the translator, he resists the need to transform his memories into full-blooded participation in the present.

Up in his room, Gorchakov opens the window to allow in the sound of rain, which dissipates with the onset of sleep and the arrival of a dog – apparently Gorchakov's faithful companion from home. At the end of this long dolly shot, the camera tracks in on Gorchakov's head; his conflicting desires for Eugenia and for home resolve themselves into a fantasy of Eugenia's reconciliation with his wife, and then of his pregnant wife lying on his bed. The passage between different layers of consciousness, as Gorchakov sublimates his desire into images of memory and fantasy, is intimated less by the images themselves than by subtle variations in lighting, sound and colour. Thus Gorchakov may avert his gaze in favour of comforting fantasies, but Tarkovsky never does, nor

Gorchakov looks into the camera (*Nostalghia*).



Gorchakov's home (*Nostalghia*).

does he allow his spectators to. As soon as Tarkovsky senses the commencement of desire within the frame, he analyses its directionality with an almost surgical precision. The spectator is involved in this analysis not as a passive object, but as the very locus of mediation. There is no possibility to escape to memory, as Gorchakov seeks to do; instead the contrary flows of desire place the spectator in an increasingly intense present moment. By unsettling any stable shore in past or future, Tarkovsky achieves an effect on our notions of desire and fulfilment that can only be described as subversive.

Roman Polanski, *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1958).

The kind of subversion achieved by Tarkovsky can be more precisely defined by examining a parallel between Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* and Roman Polanski's 1958 short *Two Men and a Wardrobe*. Two men emerge from the sea, carrying ashore a large wardrobe with a mirror. As they walk through town they encounter various forms of intolerance and hostility, so they return into the sea. The film is an allegory for the way impenetrable private experience scandalizes the social order, not only for the bourgeois, but even for the criminal class. One particular shot prefigures the scene in *Nostalghia* where the poet Gorchakov looks into a mirror in a wardrobe parked incongruously in the street and sees not his own reflection, but that of Domenico. This shot is not only symbolic of Gorchakov's identification with Domenico and his acceptance of Domenico's sacrifice. It is also a manifestation of the way private epiphanies undermine public spaces. The urgency of the two men's sacrifices is evidenced by the arrival of emergency personnel, both to the Capitoline Hill and to Bagno Vignoni. The glass on a mundane wardrobe becomes a space that subverts the very bases of civilized order.

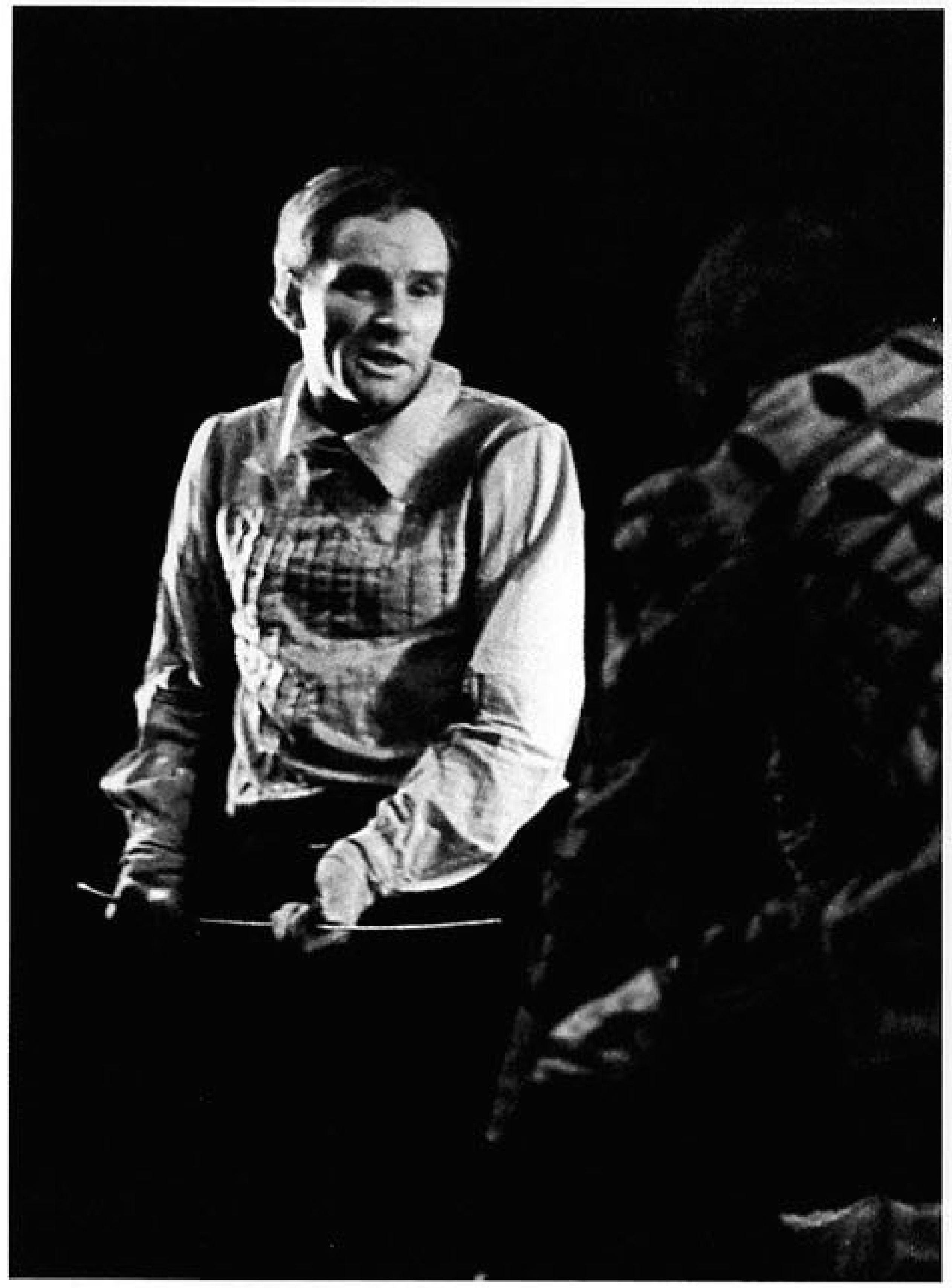
As Gorchakov merges with Domenico, it is unclear whose imagination is dictating the terms. Gorchakov's conversation with Domenico is followed by a flashback that shows Domenico's family being freed from his captivity; the children are almost identical to those who appear in Gorchakov's own memory of his home. The German Shepherd dog that visits Gorchakov at night could be from his memory or from his image

Gorchakov merges with Domenico (*Nostalghia*).

of Domenico. Gorchakov himself seems unsure; the only material proof of his entire interchange with Domenico is the candle he discovers in his pocket (a detail taken from 'Hoffmanniana'; CS 349). Gorchakov takes upon himself Domenico's mission of conveying the candle across the bath, and – in the scene of the mirror in the wardrobe – even Domenico's guilt; but has he not all along been projecting his own understanding onto Domenico? Or is this all a result of Domenico's claim that 'one drop and another make one big drop, not two', which is seconded by the poster on his wall declaring '1 + 1 = 1'. For his part Domenico has already hatched a more ambitious scheme for saving the world – his self-immolation; in his rambling speech (Eugenia compares him to Fidel Castro) Domenico intimates that he has progressed to a higher state of being: 'Where am I when I am not in reality or in my imagination?' The two characters meet only in the element of fire, and it would be fatuous to claim that they constitute a kind of ritual community, allowing Gorchakov (in the final shot) to gather the temporal manifold into a present of plenitude and ubiquity, free of desire or temptation. It is only an image, a stirring one, but one that reminds us most of all that images are manipulable. Time is imprinted in the image, but only insofar as the image continues to flow in a life, as in a film.

In his writings on aesthetics Tarkovsky made frequent appeal to the idea that the arts are distinguished by their temporal nature. In a late interview, in response to a question concerning the possibility of theatrical adaptations of his films, Tarkovsky noted: 'Film interests me in that it pays no heed of the time or rhythm of the viewer; it has its very own. And if one were to transpose it to the stage, one would eliminate this issue of the time I take in my film, which is something very important. Without it everything falls apart' (ATI 181). While he only elaborated a theory of the cinema, which he defined in terms of 'imprinted time', the broader argument about the temporal distinctiveness of each art form is borne out by Tarkovsky's stage productions of *Hamlet* (1977 at Lenkom Theatre, Moscow) and *Boris Godunov* (1983–4, Covent Garden). Both works were experimental and garnered mixed reviews, but are of central importance for Tarkovsky's overall artistic project and aesthetic theory.

Tarkovsky had long nourished an interest in the theatre and especially in *Hamlet*, which he contemplated staging as early as 1967.[7] His first



Hamlet, Lenkom Theatre, Moscow.

Hamlet, Lenkom Theatre, Moscow.

opportunity arose only in 1973, thanks to Mark Zakharov, director of the Lenkom Theatre (short for the Theatre of the Lenin League of Communist Youth). Zakharov urged Tarkovsky to stage a lesser-known play, but Tarkovsky found little to interest him in the classical Russian repertoire. *Hamlet*, Tarkovsky's first choice, had only recently been staged by Iurii Liubimov at the Taganka Theatre with Vladimir Vysotsky in the main role; but this production may only have stirred Tarkovsky's competitive spirit. (Curiously, Tarkovsky's production of *Boris Godunov* was also closely preceded by Liubimov, who worked with Claudio Abbado at La Scala.) From the very beginning he cast Solonitsyn as Hamlet and Terekhova as Gertrude (which was difficult since they were not members of the troupe), and he engaged Eduard Artem'ev to compose the music, all of which suggested that he saw the play as an extension of the world he had already created on film. As in film, Tarkovsky began by formulating a conception, which would gradually be shaped into a completed work by the resistance of the medium and of time.

Tarkovsky's conception was that Hamlet, a sophisticated and sensitive man, somewhat unwittingly accepts the guilt of murder after the visitation of the ghost: 'The point is not that [the father] was killed. People get killed all the time. But Hamlet felt himself predestined for a different kind of life' (OS 211). Viewing *The Mousetrap*, the play within the play, Hamlet suddenly becomes conscious of his moral debasement, after which he completely loses the very will to live. In order to heighten the tension in *The Mousetrap*, Tarkovsky decided to have it performed by the same actors as played Claudius and Gertrude, so that the audience would see it 'with Hamlet's eyes' (MF 297). Gertrude, by contrast, only gradually comes to suspect Claudius of the deed, and in the end chooses to drink the poison. Focused on showing the full development of each character's personality, the play ends with 'a mountain of corpses', 'a mountain of suicides', amidst which Hamlet rises to extend a hand to all of the other characters, 'as if forgiving them or asking for forgiveness' (MF 303, 305).

Compared to his films, Tarkovsky demonstrated a different method of working with his actors, 'revealing all the cards to them from the very beginning' and then according them 'complete freedom' (MF 304). According to Terekhova, Tarkovsky 'could expostulate at length, eliciting the necessary state in the actor, so that the actor could begin to function and improvise in the necessary direction'.[8] By allowing such improvisation

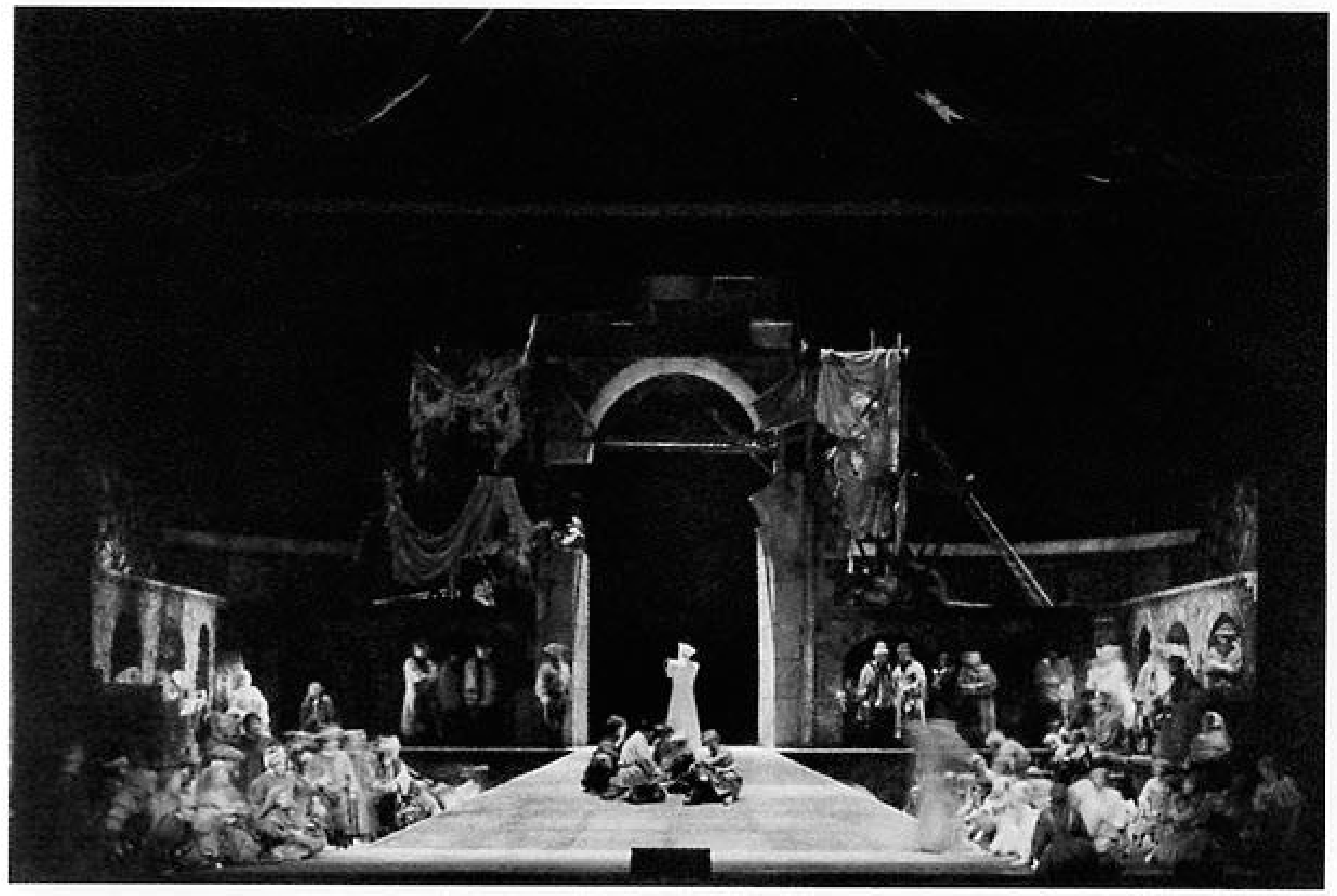
Hamlet, Lenkom Theatre, Moscow.

he sought to preserve an emotional immediacy, baring 'the process within the play itself'. Thus, while Boris Pasternak's translation was in verse, and Tarkovsky wanted to celebrate the very language, Solonitsyn allegedly spoke his part 'quietly, as if even carelessly and hurriedly', at the risk of seeming 'wan and even tedious' (MF 293, 306). Despite the emphasis on communicating the characters' subjective attitudes, later accounts (a virtual press ban on *Hamlet* has left precious little contemporary criticism) suggest a static, rather cerebral staging.

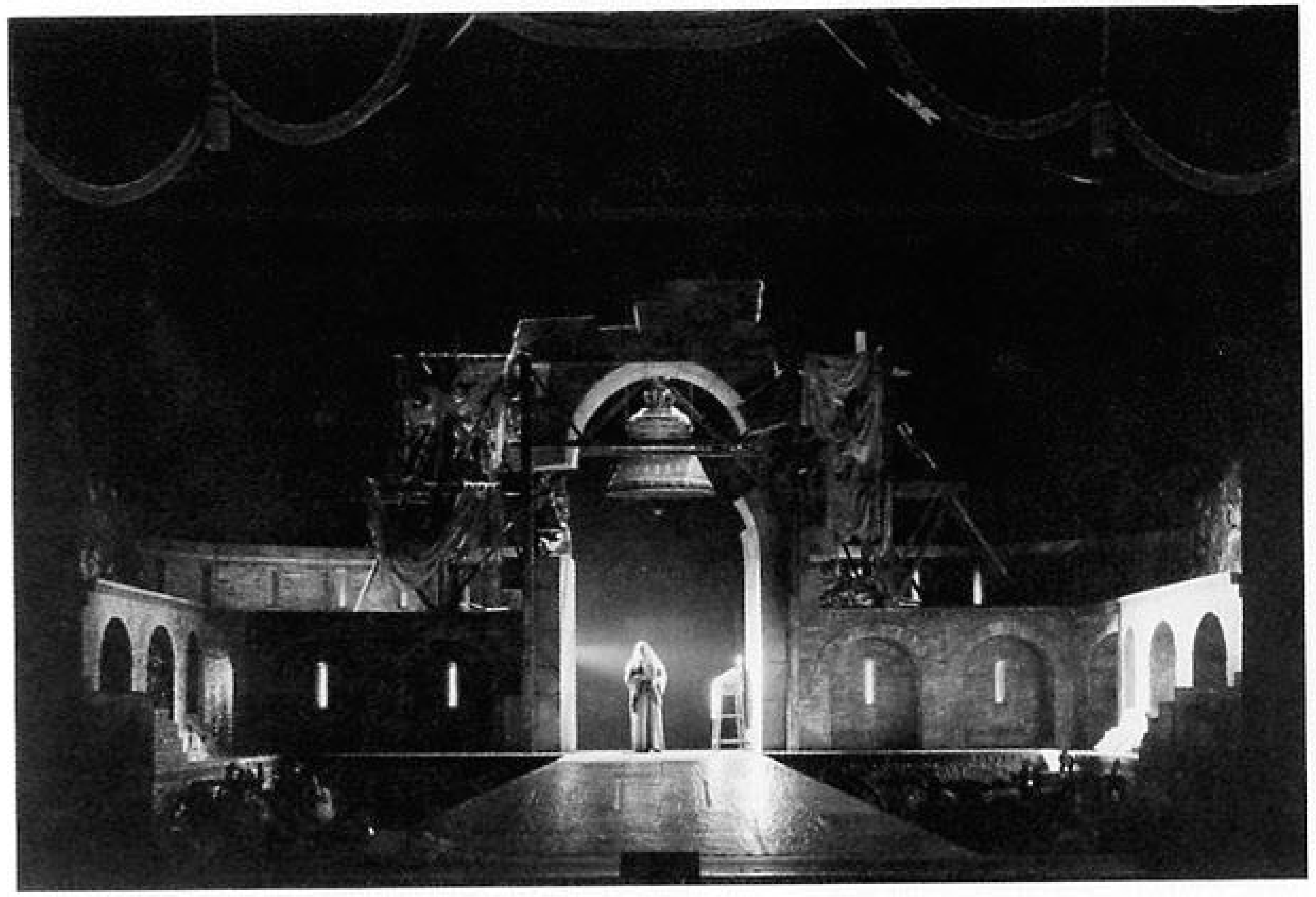
While in the cinema Tarkovsky was most concerned to create open spaces within which to capture time, his work in the theatre suggests a greater tolerance for heavy-handed symbolism. After being stabbed by Hamlet, Polonius emerges from behind the curtain and drops his red turban, which represents his blood spilling onto and (to his shame) staining the floor. In an essay Tarkovsky commented: 'On stage blood has no right to flow. But if we see an actor sliding around in blood without seeing the blood itself, then that is theatre!' (ST 154; ZV 273). Tarkovsky elsewhere criticizes a similar scene at the end of Andrzej Wajda's *Ashes and Diamond*, insisting on the material texture of the cinematic image; however, in the theatre Tarkovsky settled for 'metaphors', which flagged their underlying idea in a somewhat abstract manner.

It is telling that, when Tarkovsky began to speak publicly about his conception for a film adaptation of *Hamlet*, he was circumspect concerning the details because, he said, 'I [still] have to find an equivalent of Shakespeare in my own genre. I have to find my own form to deal with the story, a different dramaturgy' (ATI 123). The implication, of course, is that his 1976-staging failed to pose the problem of form, allowing his conception to loom over the stage, rather than being consumed in its concrete performance.

A similar pattern is evident in Tarkovsky's staging of *Boris Godunov*, which premiered on 31 October 1983 and has undergone periodic revivals ever since. Tarkovsky raised a few eyebrows when, in an appearance at Riverside Studios before the premiere, he dismissed opera as an 'unnatural genre' which is best listened to with closed eyes (ATI 138). Moreover, Tarkovsky volunteered that *Boris Godunov* was an inauspicious choice for him given its need for complex 'dramatic, psychological categories': 'It's as if I have rejected opera in a psychological and dramatic sense and, at the same time, I must do everything I can to develop these two specific qualities in my production' (ATI 139). In some respects Tarkovsky sought to return to the conception of Pushkin's original play, which, he said, Mussorgsky had 'destroyed [. . .] and then reassembled'. His central concern was thus 'the inner drama of Boris himself [. . .] a man broken by power'.[9] Another notable feature was that the Simpleton's face was covered by a sack throughout the opera, reducing him to a kind of symbolic figure akin to Don Quixote or Prince Myshkin. He is unveiled only after the death of Boris when, surrounded by a mountain of corpses, facing away from the audience and towards a spectral vision of the slain Dimitrii, he pronounces silent commentary on the error of the fickle nation.


Boris Godunov, Covent Garden, London.

Noting that he approached the operatic drama as he would a film, Tarkovsky began by observing a strict asceticism: the action of the entire opera took place on a single set (by Nikolai Dvigubsky), consisting of a ruined (or unfinished) stone arch astride a broad ramp that descended to stage front. With no curtain, scenes were distinguished mostly by the lighting (directed by Robert Bryan) and by large objects lowered from the rafters, such as a large bell, a crucifix (in the Polish court) and a pendulum. The discipline of the set was not always matched in the stage direction. During the scene in Chudov Monastery the background is suddenly illuminated to reveal Rublëv's *Trinity* as a *tableau vivant*. The same scene depicted the murder of Tsarevich Dimitrii, which could be understood either as a dramatization of Pimen's 'final tale' or as Grisha's dream,



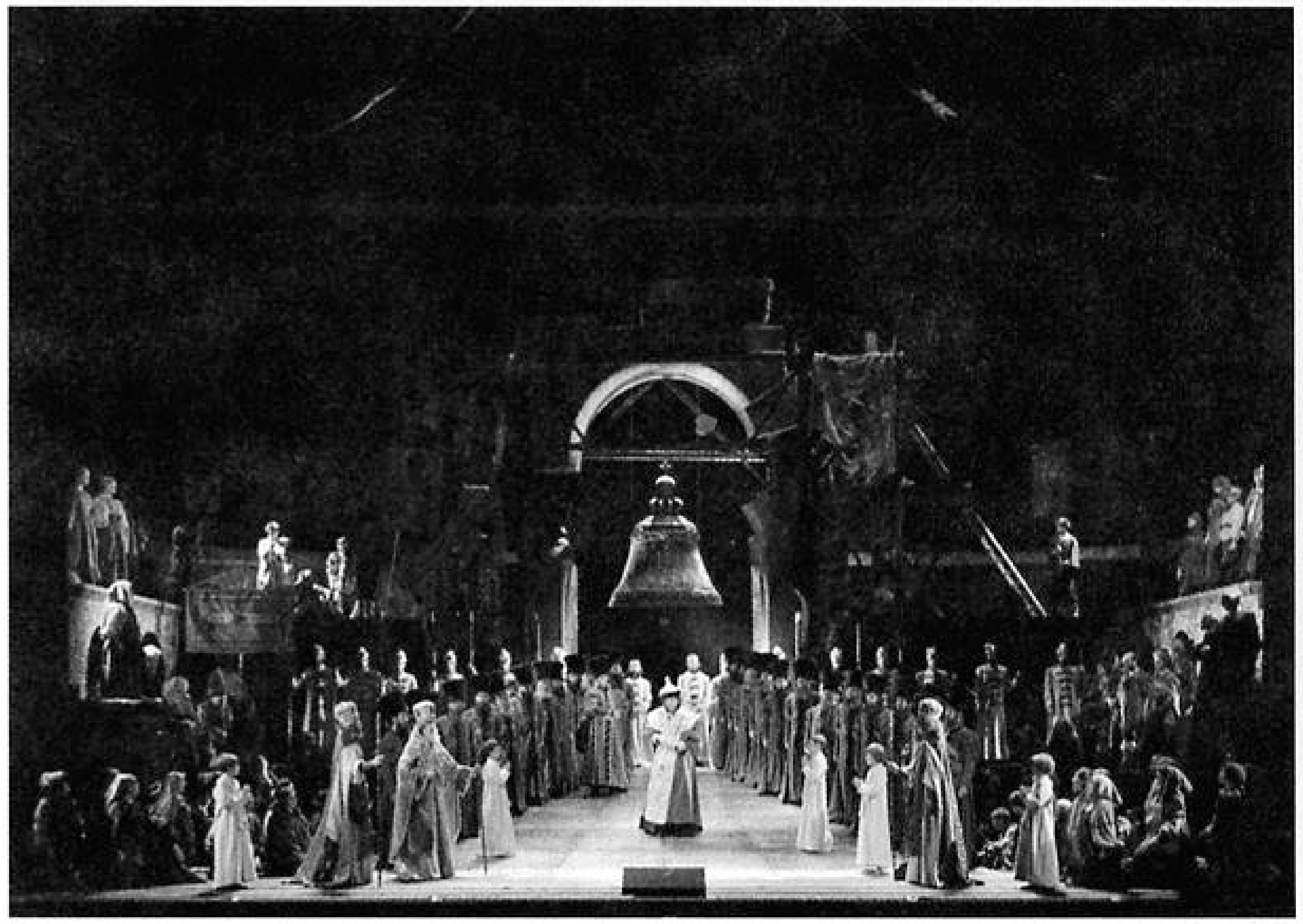
Boris Godunov, Covent Garden.

after which Dimitrii floated through the opera as the materialization of Boris's guilty conscience or as his guardian angel, in a manner reminiscent of Tarkovsky's Hamlet (OS 375). Fëdor's map of Russia doubles as a large carpet that Boris tramples underfoot and then pointedly wraps himself in. The way that the statues come to life in the Polish court puzzled many critics; it appears to have been carried over from *Nostalghia*, where in his letter (read by Eugenia) Sosnovsky has a very similar dream. One also sees a related image in one of Tarkovsky's Polaroid snapshots (IL 115).

Tarkovsky had particular problems plotting the interaction between the soloists and the crowd; in his films crowds figure only at the very periphery of the individual's private drama, if at all, but in Mussorgsky (and, especially, Pushkin) the crowd (symbolizing the 'nation') has an insensate agency.[10] In Tarkovsky's staging, the soloists occupy the front of the ramp, while the crowds continually writhe behind them and on the sides of the ramp, symbolizing the people's passive suffering as a result of their rulers' actions. The stage is rendered as polycentric as Tarkovsky's frames, but without the camera's agency the 'atmosphere' dissolves into symbolism without attaining a specific temporal pressure. For instance, opera critic Paul Griffiths wondered 'whether [Tarkovsky's] ending might be more powerful if it were less easily positive'.[11] The staging struck another critic as 'a rather old-fashioned grand opera spectacle, more suited to Meyerbeer than to Mussorgsky', redeemed only by the quality of the singing and Abbado's conducting.[12] Indeed, the overall effect was more than a little reminiscent of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*,[13] which Tarkovsky had elsewhere criticized as 'a series of hieroglyphics' (ST 67).

The commission to stage *Boris Godunov* was extended by the conductor Claudio Abbado after his viewing of *Andrei Rublëv*,[14] and the difference between Tarkovsky's cinematic and theatrical poetics is especially palpable in his numerous borrowings from the film, such as the bell and the icon, the function of which verges on the decorative. The unveiling of the Simpleton at the end directly references the conversation of Andrei and Theophanes after the sack of Vladimir: with an axe lying prominently at stage front, snow falls in church and the dead rise in witness. As one critic has written, 'Tarkovsky's ominous *Boris Godunov* paled next to *Andrei Rublëv*'.[15] Indeed, the opera seems more intent on referencing the film than on adapting its defining characteristic – its poignant temporality – to a new medium.

Most interesting for our purposes, however, is Tarkovsky's use of a huge pendulum, which swings at intermittent points during domestic scenes at court, accompanying the clockwork-like musical themes that symbolize (it would seem) the inexorable beat of fate. It appears at the



Boris Godunov, Covent Garden.

beginning of the first court scene, and then again in the so-called clock scene, after Boris's conversation with Shuisky, as Boris portentously wraps himself in a map of Russia. It swings for the last time as Boris lies dying, when he hears his death-knell, and comes to a halt under the gaze of Dmitrii's ghost. In the opera this integral part of the cinematic fabric is separated out into a clearly legible symbol: the death of Boris completes the cycle of events he initiated with the murder of the legitimate heir. At the same time, the pendulum links Boris's betrayal to that of the younger prince in *Andrei Rublëv*; as the latter surveys the wreck of the cathedral in Vladimir, a large censer swings behind him; its motion is suspended as the prince recalls his conflict with his elder brother. In the film the intervention of memory literally brings time to a stop in a complex, composite moment; the vast epic battle becomes palpable as an event in human time. If in his stage works Tarkovsky kept the pendulum swinging for as long as the action continued, his films begin only when the pendulum ceases to swing, liberating time to flow freely through the shot.

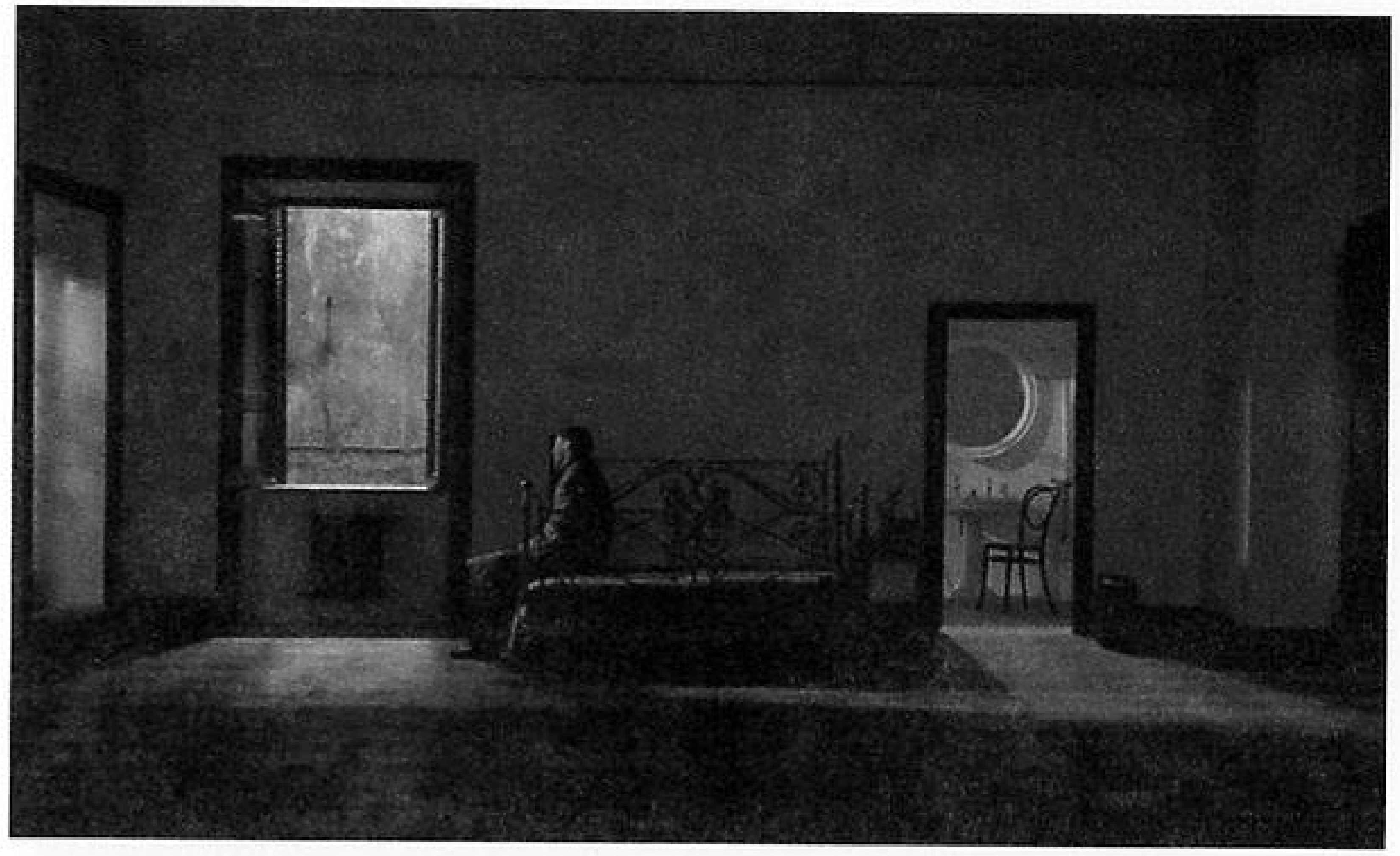
9 Shot

In an interview during the production of *Nostalghia* Tarkovsky directly addressed the nature of nostalgia and of time. Nostalgia, he said, 'is not the same as a longing (*toska*) for the past. Nostalgia is a longing for the space of time that has passed in vain.'[1] The reason, he explained, is that the 'instant' of the present can be experienced only 'when we fall into an abyss: we are in a state between the instant (of life) and the future (of the end)'. The logic is not immediately evident, but Tarkovsky's language insists on the spatiality of temporal experience. Time becomes palpable when it coincides with space; it is at this very moment that it becomes the object of our longing and of our regret.

This is about as close as one can get to Tarkovsky's idea of the long take: a span of film across an abyss of experience, which slips from the viewer's grasp even as it satisfies the desire for more, averting the fear of the end even as it moves, inexorably, towards a cut. In *Stalker* Tarkovsky 'wanted there to be no break in time between montage cuts [. . .] so that time and its fluidity were manifest and existed *within* each shot [. . .] as if I had shot the film in a single take' (*ST* 193–4; *ZV* 315). It is not that in these long takes Tarkovsky's camera exemplifies an authentic attitude towards the world, a pious lassitude that allows things to be themselves and to reveal themselves in their elemental form. In fact, his camera is constantly reminding us of itself, and nowhere more insistently than in his long tracking shots. The camera seems reluctant to loosen its grip, as if its gaze is the only thing keeping the world from crumbling, as if it is only the elements of cinema that sustain the natural elements of the world. The long take encompasses the actual, the symbolic and the imaginary in a single duration, allowing for the emergence of the real as the friction between orders of reality, the substance of time.

It may seem unrealistic to expect redemption from cinematic technique, but this expectation accords with the narrative of *Nostalghia*. Discussing the film's conception at the beginning of production, Tarkovsky specifically noted that Gorchakov (then a historian of Italian architecture) was on his first trip to the land he studied, which hitherto he had known 'only by reproductions and photographs'.[2] At the same time, in Tarkovsky's account, Gorchakov becomes painfully conscious of the fact that 'he cannot derive anything new from his Italian experiences, that he won't be able to share his impressions with friends and loved ones'. Just as Gorchakov has been unable to appropriate Italian sights directly, so also he will remain incapable of communicating them directly to others. Gorchakov's attempt to turn the historical past into his own personal present runs up against his future inability to share this present as a common memory. In other words, his desire to bring photographs to life founders on the discrepancy between the photographs and the original objects, as well as on his inability to record his inward experiences as photographs. As in the past, so in the future material images will continue to offer indispensable mediation between Gorchakov and the objects of his desire, grounding the very community of 'friends and loved ones' that he longs to recuperate.

The film, however, is less concerned with this past or future than with the present moment in which the finality and possibility are equally manifest, in which the image no sooner becomes meaningful than it slips away. Tarkovsky strove to make films without tense. Just as *Andrei Rublëv* refuses to recede into history, so also *Solaris* resists removal into the future. In *Stalker* both the sci-fi premise and the Soviet background do nothing to blunt the insistent present-ness of the narrative (which is only seriously threatened by the unmistakable 1970s sound of Artem'ev's analogue synthesizers). *Nostalghia* took this temporal immediacy to an extreme. The film is autobiographical only in the sense that it seeks to instantiate the temporal atmosphere of the director's experience; the plot is merely a means to this end: 'As a sculptor needs the wire armature for his sculpting, only thus – in this function – does the dramaturgy exist in *Nostalghia*: so that it all held together and accrued flesh.'[3] In this sense Tarkovsky regarded *Nostalghia* as his purest, most *cinematic* film. If cinema has usually sought to achieve temporal depth by the insertion of flashbacks and still photos, Tarkovsky remained wholly in the immediacy of the present moment, caught in the abyss between potentiality and finality.



Gorchakov in his room (*Nostalghia*).

This abyss is nowhere more palpable than in Tarkovsky's long takes, in which spatial folds are sewn together with seams of time. An early example of this is when Gorchakov lies down on his bed, the rain falling outside his open window. A German shepherd dog mysteriously emerges from the lit bathroom and lies down beneath the bed. The camera holds throughout a series of subtle changes in lighting. Gorchakov's figure is almost invisible behind the iron grating of the bedstead until his face (which itself is not where we expect it) is lit by the sudden break of dawn. What we thought was an interminable instant turns out to have been an entire night; by both extending and compressing the event, Tarkovsky allows time to manifest itself as a force.

A remarkable sequence of long takes occurs when Gorchakov visits Domenico's home. As Gorchakov opens the door the camera surveys Domenico's floor, which appears to be a model landscape, complete with a river and ruins. It merges so seamlessly with the real landscape visible in the window (a subtle reference to Renaissance painting) that it is easy to lose track of the scale and the perspective. After Gorchakov enters he looks at himself in a mirror; the camera pans left, over a gourd, a potted plant and other objects, and unexpectedly finds Gorchakov again in what seems an impossible position; the fold in space must have been produced by a cut in time, but we cannot go back (and if we do we will still not find the suture); the shot sticks out as a temporal seam, which joins the manifold of time into a single space. There follows a series of panning

Domenico's room with landscape (*Nostalghia*).

shots that, though they place Domenico and Gorchakov in the same space, continue to suggest spatial folds. For instance, there is no trace of the model landscape on the floor of the leaky, columned hall through which Gorchakov and Domenico exit into the square, where the drama of Domenico's past is played out. The increasing conflation of the two men is an identity less of space than of time; they will never again be in the same place, but they will never again be apart.

This unity culminates in one of Tarkovsky's grandest long takes: Gorchakov's crossing of the drained pool at Bagno Vignoni in the finale of *Nostalghia*. He described it to actor Oleg Iankovsky as 'display[ing] an entire human life in one shot, without any editing, from beginning to end, from birth to the very moment of death'.[4] In case of success, he told Iankovsky, 'the act may be the true meaning of my life. It certainly will be the finest shot I ever made – if you can do it, if you can endure to the end.'

However one regards such hyperbole, it would be wrong to separate the effect of this (or any other) long take from the narrative whole. This particular long take closely echoes two previous ones. The first occurs when Gorchakov and Eugenia arrive at Bagno Vignoni to find Domenico pacing its perimeter to the jeers of the bathers. The camera follows the characters in turn as they move around the pool, peering in from time to time. Soon thereafter, Eugenia and Gorchakov are shown standing before a wall; the camera follows Eugenia as she walks to the left, addresses Domenico (who is riding a stationary bicycle) on Gorchakov's behalf, and then returns to the right to convey the message that 'he doesn't feel like talking'. Eugenia repeats her intercession, after which she leaves with the words 'our journey is finished'. Then, without any cut, Gorchakov moves left, introduces himself to Domenico and enters the house. As in the final long take, the camera rests only after the third repetition of its lateral motion. The shot of Gorchakov in the pool is the consummation not only of Domenico's cherished wish, but also of the camera's movement throughout the film; it compresses within itself not only the spaces of the film, but also its entire narrative duration.

Gorchakov's hand shielding the candle (*Nostalghia*).

The long take was the centrepiece of Tarkovsky's theory of film, which received its first and arguably fullest expression in his 1967 essay 'Imprinted Time'. The essay was composed during the protracted dispute over *Andrei Rublëv*, and no doubt represents the fruit of the intense self-analysis necessitated by this crisis. Detailed comparison shows that the differences between the two extant versions of the film do not hold to the conventional distinction between a director's cut and a studio release version; in addition to cuts and deletions, some shots were added, at least two shots were replaced by alternative takes, and dialogue was re-recorded. Evidently, the objections had less to do with pure length (of film or of shot) than with the very foundations of Tarkovsky's cinema aesthetic. It was probably the enforced contemplation of his own aesthetic that gave Tarkovsky occasion to write 'Imprinted Time'.

The first episode of Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Passion According to Andrei* features a jester who performs a ribald ditty in a barn full of raucous peasants. The arrival of three monks immediately puts a damper on the festivities. When the monk Kirill rejects an offer of refreshment with the words, 'Thank you, we don't drink (*Spasibo ne p'ëm*)', the jester retorts with the unfinished rhyming phrase: 'And women we don't . . . (*I bab ne . . .*)'. While its form is indicated by the rhyme, the elided word has to be supplied by the viewer, leaving open the degree of sacrilege or humour. The narrative simply does not work without the viewer's contribution, making the viewer complicit in his or her own construction of the reality represented on screen. In the re-edited release version of the film *Andrei Rublëv* (1969), this ambiguity was eliminated by having the bawdy jester complete his phrase with a euphemistic substitute-word: 'And women we don't shake (*triasëm*)'. The event remains essentially the same, but its original open-endedness has been sealed in a baldly implausible manner.

This minuscule change illustrates Tarkovsky's strategy in the revised version of his film: to re-edit the same basic shots into a new sequence that removes ambiguities and limits interpretive latitude, even at the cost of flawed narrative logic. By contrast, the jester's silence in *The Passion* is a vivid index of Tarkovsky's prevailing approach to cinematic storytelling both in his films and in his theoretical reflections. Instead of specifying causal chains, Tarkovsky gives just enough information to disclose the blank spots in the narrative. As filmmaker Grigorii Kozintsev noted, 'Rublëv comes to life not on the screen but in the viewer's consciousness: and each has his own Rublëv.'[5] In 'Imprinted Time', Tarkovsky identifies the interaction of screen space and viewer attention as the creation of *time*. While this view is sometimes taken simply as a privileging of the shot – and specifically the long take – over montage, in fact these are just two elements in Tarkovsky's disconcerting narratives, which require intense viewer activity to be held together in a single narrative shape.

Their central role in creating the deep texture and monumental grandeur is based in the fact that Tarkovsky's long takes both establish and undermine spatial and narrative continuity with polyrhythmic and polycentric framing. Therefore the fate of Tarkovsky's signature long takes in the re-edited *Andrei Rublëv* can provide a concise guide to its overall narrative tendency. Although Tarkovsky retained the majority of very long takes in the re-edit, they often perform a different function, linked less to rhythm and spatial composition than to narrative efficiency.

The first function of the very long take in *The Passion* is to establish the space of a scene. Insofar as these long takes impose an unproblematic sense of continuity, they can be seen as establishing the atmosphere of the narrative. Episode one begins with a very long take of the three monks leaving the Trinity Monastery, and continues with two more long takes (48" and 22") of them walking to the right through fields. The fourth shot is a 360-degree pan counter-clockwise around the barn which lasts just over two minutes and introduces the space where the rest of the episode will play out. In *Andrei Rublëv*, the first very long take was judged dispensable and the third was cut appreciably. The effect was to reduce the episode to a single central location with the single establishing shot of the initial circular pan in the peasant barn. This might be regarded as a minor change, and Tarkovsky specifically expressed his satisfaction with it.[6]

The second function of the very long take is demonstrated later in this episode by another 360-degree pan around the barn, 1'23" in duration, this time in a clockwise direction. By reprising the earlier take, it allows the viewer to register the changes which have occurred in the mood of the people since the arrival of the monks. If the first long take showed the jester's song, this one shows a tired, possibly inebriated audience breaking into smaller groups. In this sense it contributes to the narrative continuity. However, this continuity masks a disturbing fold in time: while the shot begins its panorama with Kirill and Andrei seated together, when the camera returns to its starting point, Kirill is absent. This pan shot is somewhat reminiscent of the long 360-degree pan at the beginning of *The Manchurian Candidate*, during which the scene impossibly changes from the Ladies Garden Club in a New Jersey hotel to a military hall somewhere in communist Asia; the benign old ladies of

The first pan in *Andrei Rublëv*, Episode 1, 'The Jester'.

The three monks: Second pan in *Andrei Rublëv*, Episode 1, 'The Jester'.

The two monks (*Andrei Rublëv*, Episode 1, 'The Jester'.)

the club turn into communist brainwashers. The internal discontinuity of this shot is explained away as the nightmare of Captain Marco, played by Frank Sinatra. Without such an extrinsic explanation, the shot in *The Passion* both asserts and undermines the realistic temporal continuity of the scene, inspiring both the confidence that the viewer is seeing everything and the fear of things unseen.

The fate of this second 360-degree pan in *Andrei Rublëv* is emblematic of Tarkovsky's approach to the re-edit. He divided it into two shots, which cumulatively last 59 seconds (24 seconds less than the single shot in *The Passion*). The cut allows the viewer to assume the passage of some time during which Kirill may have made his exit. Yet the removal of the spatial fold destroys the distinctive temporality of the shot, thus annulling the very rationale of the long take, which now seems conspicuous and gratuitous.

The two very long takes in the peasant barn also perform a third function, which is to contribute to a diffuse narrative point of view. In the

The ladies of the knitting circle become sinister Asiatic communists during the circular pan in *The Manchurian Candidate*.

course of this single scene, and even of individual shots within it, numerous characters make a claim on the viewer, including each of the three monks, the jester, his pitiful imitator and the children. The titular character has not yet been identified, and at no point is the viewer given clear information either on the dominant point of view or on the destination of the narrative. The viewer has simply to assume an absent unity of perspective, which must be reconstructed from the fragments he is given. *The Passion* pursues this complex strategy much more consistently than *Andrei Rublëv*, which diminishes rival narrative centres (without making Andrei Rublëv into any conventional kind of protagonist).

Early on Tarkovsky allegedly said: 'If you extend the normal length of a shot, first you get bored; but if you extend it further still you become interested in it; and if you extend it even more a new quality, a new intensity of attention is born' (CS 6). Tarkovsky's experiences with *Andrei Rublëv* encouraged him to develop this insight into 'Imprinted Time', essentially a defence of his cinema poetics. He locates the elusive concept of atmosphere in the 'cine-image', which he defines as 'the observation of facts of life in time, organized in accordance with the forms of life itself and with its temporal laws' (ST 68; ZV 168). In particular, Tarkovsky declared the particular ability of cinema to depict *time*: 'I think that what a person normally goes to the cinema for is *time*, whether for time wasted, time lost, or time that has yet to be gained' (ST 63; ZV 163). He insisted that the sequential arrangement of images must be based on their internal content, specifically on their temporal 'pressure':

> the cinematic image cannot be divided and segmented in conflict with its temporal nature; continuous time cannot be removed from it. The image becomes authentically cinematic when (amongst other things) not only does it live within time, but time also lives within it, even within each separate frame.
>
> No 'dead' object – whether a table, a chair, or a glass – that is presented in the shot separate from everything else, can be presented outside of continuous time, as if from the perspective of an absence of time [ST 68; ZV 168–9].

Temporal continuity preserves the 'concrete life and emotional content of the object filmed' (ST 70; ZV 170) – that which Tarkovsky calls its *atmosphere*.

Alongside this emphasis on temporal continuity or atmosphere, Tarkovsky was equally concerned with the *texture* that is produced when shots are arranged into narrative structures. If the continuity within the shot communicates atmosphere, then the discontinuous sequencing of shots creates 'the sense of fact and texture (*faktura*) that live and change in time' (ST 69; ZV 169). Far from privileging either extreme, Tarkovsky was most concerned to heighten the tension that arises between them, a tension he identifies as 'the pressure of time'. Insofar as neither rigid sequentiality nor spontaneity capture reality in its totality, Tarkovsky sought to achieve a kind of discontinuous sequence of events that would suggest '*what* lies between them, what kind of continuity connects them' [ST 65; ZV 165]. This connective medium, for Tarkovsky, is time itself. Time is not packaged as a ready commodity within the film; instead, it arises as the viewer's deployment of the film's inward tension as a continuous narrative.

Tarkovsky's innovative use of montage has been obscured by the emphasis in his writings on the shot and the image, as well as by his anti-Eisensteinian rhetoric. Both of these elements remained at the core of Tarkovsky's writings on cinema to the end of his life; he once wrote that 'in Eisenstein's films individual shots do not possess the truth of time. The shots themselves are absolutely static and anemic' [ST 119–20; ZV 232]. However, Tarkovsky's attitude towards Eisenstein was not so simple. In 'Imprinted Time', Tarkovsky criticizes Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* (1943/6) as a heavy-handed collation of hieroglyphs that the viewer is supposed simply to decipher. Moreover, the images, acting style and 'atmosphere' of Eisenstein's film 'approach theatre (musical theatre)' in their wildly expressive (almost expressionist) and violently affective nature. Tarkovsky sternly concludes that *Ivan the Terrible* 'even ceases to be a work of cinema from my purely theoretical point of view' (ST 67; ZV 168). The qualifying phrase here is crucial, for Tarkovsky nonetheless goes on to commend *Ivan the Terrible* for its 'bewitching' rhythm. In fact, I would argue that, while suspicious of Eisenstein's theatricality, Tarkovsky was advocating a *return* to Eisenstein's emphasis on the rhythm of shot and sequence, which he thought held the key to activating the spectator as a participant in the narrative enterprise. His polemic with Eisenstein essentially boils down to the claim that montage can be applied to blocks of longer duration than Eisenstein allowed for, as long as the resulting rhythm remains consistent.[7] Tarkovsky repeatedly registered his annoyance with the way the quick rhythm of the Battle of Chud Lake in *Alexander Nevsky* 'contradicts the inner rhythm of the scene as it is shot. It is just as if one poured out Niagara Falls glass by glass. Instead of Niagara, you'd get a puddle.'[8]

Tarkovsky's viewpoint can be elucidated by considering his direct confrontation with Eisenstein over the interpretation of Japanese haiku poetry. In his 1929 essay 'Beyond the Shot', Eisenstein cited several haiku as images that undergo dialectical development analogous to that of a montage sequence. Of Eisenstein's examples, Tarkovsky cites the following two:

> Ancient monastery.
> Cold moon.
> Wolf howling.
>
> Quiet field.
> Butterfly flying.
> Butterfly sleeping.[9]

Each of Eisenstein's examples is divisible into three discrete sentences, and each sentence features a single figure, separate from the other two in space or time. This discontinuity between single images underscores the central aspect of Eisenstein's theory of montage, which is that shots should be combined according to the dialectical logic of conflict and synthesis.[10] As Eisenstein writes concerning these poems: 'The simplest juxtaposition of two or three details of a material series produces a perfectly finished representation of another order, the psychological.'[11] Tarkovsky contrasts Eisenstein's haiku to others that demonstrate 'the purity, sensitivity, and integrity of an observation of life':

> A fishing-pole in the wave
> Lightly brushed against
> By a full moon.
>
> Dew fell,
> On all the spikes of thistle
> Drops are suspended [*ST* 66; *ZV* 167].

Each of Tarkovsky's poems presents a single space within which three details are simultaneously present. Moreover, not all of the lines communicate single images; some describe motion or even sound within the same frame as the preceding line. The discrete action in each of Eisenstein's haiku – the wolf howling or the butterfly flying – punctures a static background and is over. By contrast, in Tarkovsky's first haiku it is the dynamic background that brings the foreground into motion, while in his second the movement is created by the narrowing of the aperture as the poem zooms in from the plant to the dewdrops suspended upon it. Tarkovsky shifts from sequential juxtapositions to what Eisenstein would call 'vertical montage' or juxtapositions between different planes within the shot or segment. Instead of destroying the sense of continuity, the dynamic focus reveals hidden possibilities within it. This does not necessarily contradict Eisenstein's view that 'the depictive quality and rhythm within montage are inevitably in conflict'.[12] In both cases, the 'narrative always proceeds with an eye towards the rhythm', as Eisenstein stipulated.[13]Tarkovsky simply interprets this concept of rhythm less as the juxtaposition between shots than as the play of distances and planes within the shot. As he later said:

> I do not consider that the essence of cinema is the juxtaposition of two sequences that should engender a third notion, as Eisenstein would have it. On the contrary, the n^th^ shot seems to me the sum of the first, the second, the third. . . [. . .] in short as the sum of all the preceding shots. And this forms the sense of a shot in relation to all that precede it. This is the principle of my montage [*ATI* 19].

The question of cinematic rhythm implicates the areas where Tarkovsky's cinema theory appears to depart most radically from Eisenstein's conceptual framework, namely atmosphere, texture and time. This constellation of three terms also helps to explain Tarkovsky's use of the phrase 'sculpting in time' as a metaphor for cinema. Tarkovsky writes:

> Just as a sculptor takes a block of marble, and, inwardly conscious of the features of his finished piece, removes everything that is not part of it – so the filmmaker, from a 'block of time' made up of an enormous, solid cluster of living facts, cuts off and discards whatever he does not need [. . .] [*ST* 63–4; *ZV* 163]

The metaphor recurs in Tarkovsky's statements, often with intriguing differences:

> The cinema is capable of capturing time, which is beyond the capability of any other art form (except for television). But if we capture on film the life of a real man from birth to death, this is not yet art. The essence of the author's work is a kind of sculpting in time. The artist comes, chooses his material, discarding all that is unnecessary, leaving only that which is essential, necessary, obligatory, – and unexpectedly there arises a work of cinematic art.[14]

Like the block of marble, the raw material of continuous shots must be chiselled away with innumerable cuts in order to create a surface of textures, which itself comes to life as a meaningful shape only when deployed as continuous form in the act of viewing.

Tarkovsky's theory of cinematic time can be defined more precisely in the light of André Bazin's comparable idea that film was capable of capturing real duration in continuous vision, what Bazin called the 'spatial flow of action'.[15] Like Tarkovsky, Bazin combined this Bergsonian emphasis on duration with a polemic against montage, applauding the Italian Neo-realists' efforts 'to do away with montage and to transfer to the screen the continuum of reality'.[16] Of particular interest is his appreciation of Orson Welles's 'sequence shots' and of Jean Renoir's depth of field. Despite the unequivocal nature of some of Bazin's statements, a couple of qualifications must be made. First, Bazin naturally appreciated the importance of montage, for instance in his writings on Eisenstein. Second, Bazin felt that, far from presenting an unproblematic reality, temporal realism and depth-of-field staging allows the spectator to appreciate reality as an ambiguous and discontinuous process.

However, if for Bazin depth-of-field framing reveals the ambiguity of reality within the temporal continuum, Tarkovsky calls the continuum itself into question; time appears not as a flow, but as a seam that sutures folds in space. Tarkovsky's long takes undermine the possibility of their own continuity, which is constituted and animated only in the act of viewing.

A distinguishing mark of Tarkovsky's theorizing is the fluency with which he passes from technical to metaphysical matters:

> The specificity of the cinema consists in capturing time, and the cinema works with time as with a unit of aesthetic measure that can be repeated indefinitely. [. . .] With respect to montage my principle is the following: film is like a river; montage should be infinitely spontaneous like nature itself, and what obliges me to move from one shot to another by means of montage is not the desire to see the selected things or to force the spectator to hurry up by introducing very short sequences. I think that it always remains in the riverbed of time [ATI 19].

According to this logic, breaks in continuity result simply from the stochastic intervention of nature in its own flows. However, throughout this book I have underscored how deeply problematic is Tarkovsky's treatment of nature. Indeed, 'nature' is most palpable precisely in the guise of time, as a friction that arises when the continuous flow of images encounters its own internal resistance.

Both Tarkovsky and his original cameraman Vadim Iusov frequently speak of the way the camera 'captures' or 'isolates' (*fiksirovat'*, literally

'fixing') its visible environment (*sreda*). On the one hand the camera stabilizes it as an image;[17] on the other, as I have argued, the camera allows for its self-manifestation as an unrepresentable and impenetrable alien will, the flows that intervene in and flood over the image. The precise ways in which the camera either settles the image or renders it unsettling cannot be reduced to any one factor or technique. Tarkovsky and Iusov, in particular, marshalled all the resources at their disposal to heighten this internal cinematic tension.

Iusov contributes a dose of sobriety by noting the role of cinematic technology in establishing the realm of possibilities. He describes the cameraman as the prime 'consumer' of technology who chooses the best available means to create 'the formal equivalent of the cinematic image' described in the screenplay: 'the cinematographer is capable not only of mechanically capturing (*fiksirovat'*) reality but also of de-forming it'.[18] The 'texture of the image of the real world' is conditioned by the 'optics and the formal light qualities of the film'.[19] The camera's ability to capture movement not only by representing moving objects, but also by moving itself, requires complex technical resources, of which Tarkovsky was always a greedy 'consumer', making full use of dollies, cranes, helicopters, remote control, special effects, etc. The camera's agency also lends the image 'not only an emotional aura (*sreda*), but also an *ethical* hue'.[20] Iusov cites the example of the prologue to *Andrei Rublëv*, when the flying peasant Efim is rivalled in his ambition by the camera that follows him, swirls around him, 'fixes' him in space and then freezes up at the moment of his fall. While Efim lies prone, the air escaping from his crumpled balloon as bubbles in the river, the camera remains free to roam, like the horse that silently crosses the frame.

To adapt an old saying, man composes but the camera disposes; yet the horse that proceeds to roll on the earth in slow motion signals both the triumph of the camera and its humility before an uncapturable will of nature. Iusov gives another example of a shot in *Solaris* where preternaturally pouring rain floods a china cup on a wooden table: 'The transparency of the fragile porcelain, the sheen of the planed boards of the table, the mirror-like drops of moisture which reflect the outer world' – all of this conveys the inability of the 'tiny, beautiful creation of human hands [. . .] to contain a millionth part of the moisture that falls from the sky.'[21]

Tarkovsky's advocacy of long takes must be seen in a similar context, not as a naïve belief in his ability to 'capture' nature, but as a calculated technique of using the inherent complexity of cinema to reveal a parallel

Eugenia (*Nostalghia*).

complexity in nature. Slavoj Žižek has described a fundamental distinction in Tarkovsky's long takes in *Nostalghia*, which

> rely either on a harmonious relationship with their content, signaling the longed-for spiritual reconciliation found not in elevation from the gravitational force of the earth but in a full surrender to its inertia [. . .] or, even more interestingly, on a contrast between form and content, like the long shot of Eugenia's hysterical outburst against the hero, a mixture of sexually provocative, seductive gestures with contemptuous, dismissive remarks.[22]

Of course, Eugenia's temptation to 'surrender to the inertia' of natural flows is inseparable from her hysterical resistance to it; this tension is at the heart of all of Tarkovsky's characters and even his camera. Žižek proposes that Eugenia is protesting 'not only against the hero's tired indifference, but also, in a way, against the calm indifference of the static long shot itself, which does not let itself be disturbed by her outburst'.[23] Tarkovsky had noted a similar effect in the scene of the blinding of the masons in *Andrei Rublëv*, where '[t]he impassibility and frigidity of the immobile camera only underscored the tragic nature of what was occurring, heightening its dramatism'.[24] Indeed, the tension is stretched most taut not between Gorchakov and Eugenia per se, but between each of them and the camera, which pressurizes them, pushing them to the limit at which they begin to manifest their impenetrable identity. However, it is strange to call Tarkovsky's camera 'indifferent' and 'calm'; agitation does not necessarily require the violent jerks of a hand-held camera. The long take is no less 'destabilizing' in the final analysis.

Tarkovsky's opposition to montage cinema and emphasis on the shot were not dictated by his metaphysics, but on a profound humility before the irreducible corporeality of the world. The long take exemplifies the way that the cinema allows the imaginary and symbolic world of the director's conception to interact with the visual manifold while remaining open to incursions of the real, in the form of stochastic forces resistant to the exercise of will. This is the redemptive action that Jacques Rancière has ascribed to the cinema, which 'undoes the ordinary work of the human brain' to restore 'unto the events of sensible matter the potentialities the human brain had deprived them of in order to constitute a sensory-motor universe adapted to its needs and subject to its mastery'.[25] Tarkovsky's precise control of the image allows it to assert its autonomous will, whether in its duration or when juxtaposed with other images. This piety, at once ascetic and aesthetic, is the key to all of Tarkovsky's statements concerning the ethics and metaphysics of filmmaking; it conveys not an inflated reckoning of his own images, but a sober recognition of the role visual media have come to play in determining the very constitution of human reality.

air

The house burns (*Sacrifice*).

10 Atmosphere

At the close of Tarkovsky's creative life – and at the conclusion of any study of his work – one returns to the paradox that this profoundly cinematic artist should have laid such stress on capturing that which must always remain hidden to the eye: time, faith, atmosphere. By localizing and then subtly de-synchronizing the image Tarkovsky explodes the determinacy of space, revealing that which lies off-screen and beyond the gaze. This is a paradox that I have sought to resolve with reference to Tarkovsky's aesthetics of renunciation. Perhaps these words suggest too close a parallel between Tarkovsky and his character Andrei Rublëv, who forsakes speech and painting for years before his faith in these media is restored. In fact, Tarkovsky was much more like Boriska, the youth whose very impertinence succeeded in redeeming Rublëv's faith in representation. Tarkovsky never forsook the image, but he recognized that its singular power is highest on the verge of failure, when the invisible stuff of existence becomes palpable in its resistance to imaging.

This point is particularly crucial with regards to *Sacrifice*, Tarkovsky's final film and the one most susceptible to allegorical readings. True, Tarkovsky encouraged this tendency by describing *Sacrifice* as a 'parable' (*ST* 219); however, as I have argued, his words were not always a trustworthy guide to his films. Tarkovsky must not be identified with his character Alexander, who renounces his most prized possession in a misguided attempt to avert a vaguely intuited disaster. Tarkovsky's act was of focus, not of destruction. Nor is his asceticism akin to that of the monk Pamve, whose tale Alexander tells at the beginning of the film. Tarkovsky is not cultivating blind faith that averts one's eyes from the material world; rather he is enabling acute vision that renews the world in its very materiality. In the final analysis, *Sacrifice* is not a lament for a lost past, but a courageous encounter with the very force of time as it is revealed in the ever-changing textures of visible things.

It must be recognized that Alexander's sacrifice is presented as a failure, resulting only in the final dissolution of his family and his own confinement. As the apocalyptic act evaporates in a sordid household drama, all that remains are its vapours. Perhaps this is what Tarkovsky meant when he spoke of the dominance of atmosphere in his films. Certainly *Sacrifice* marks a further step in the direction of a pared-down aesthetic. Conceived as fulfilling the classical unities of place, time and action, *Sacrifice* provides the nearly continuous record of a traumatic experience; the only gaps in time are filled with dreams and visions that complicate the plot without retarding its merciless advance. The location, Tarkovsky said, gave 'the impression of complete emptiness' (*ATI* 160). Contributing to the strict unity of the film's tonality are a single piece of extra-diegetic music (an excerpt from Bach's *Passion According to St Matthew*) and a single major reference from visual art – Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi*, the sepia tones of which match the film's restrained palette. Yet this asceticism was merely a condition for the maximally precise manipulation of the medium, which by means of complex de-synchronizations and spatial folds rends our imaginative grasp on reality and returns us to the stubborn resistance of time.

Sacrifice hearkens directly back to *Turnabout* in its use of sound; in both works the air carries the noise of seagulls and distant fog-horns both to place the narrative and, at the same time, to dissolve it within the greater natural and social world. Shot within a bird sanctuary during the mating season, Tarkovsky was insistent that no birds be audible; thus all of the sound was recreated in the studio and post-synchronized. The creaks of the house were reproduced by the sound engineer Owe Svensson in his own country cottage, who recorded each character's gait by walking in an old house with various pairs of shoes, avoiding the use of stock sounds like the footsteps in *Nostalghia*. In addition to Bach, the soundtrack featured music of the Japanese bamboo flute and Swedish herd calling that was recorded in the 1950s from distant locations over the telephone; the mysteriousness of the voices is magnified by its multiple layers of mediation.[1] The importance of the soundtrack to *Sacrifice* underscores that its ultimate subject of representation is the invisible atmosphere that both sustains and oppresses the denizens of the house, an atmosphere fed by the harsh sea wind that scours the landscape, courses through open windows and carries the force of war.

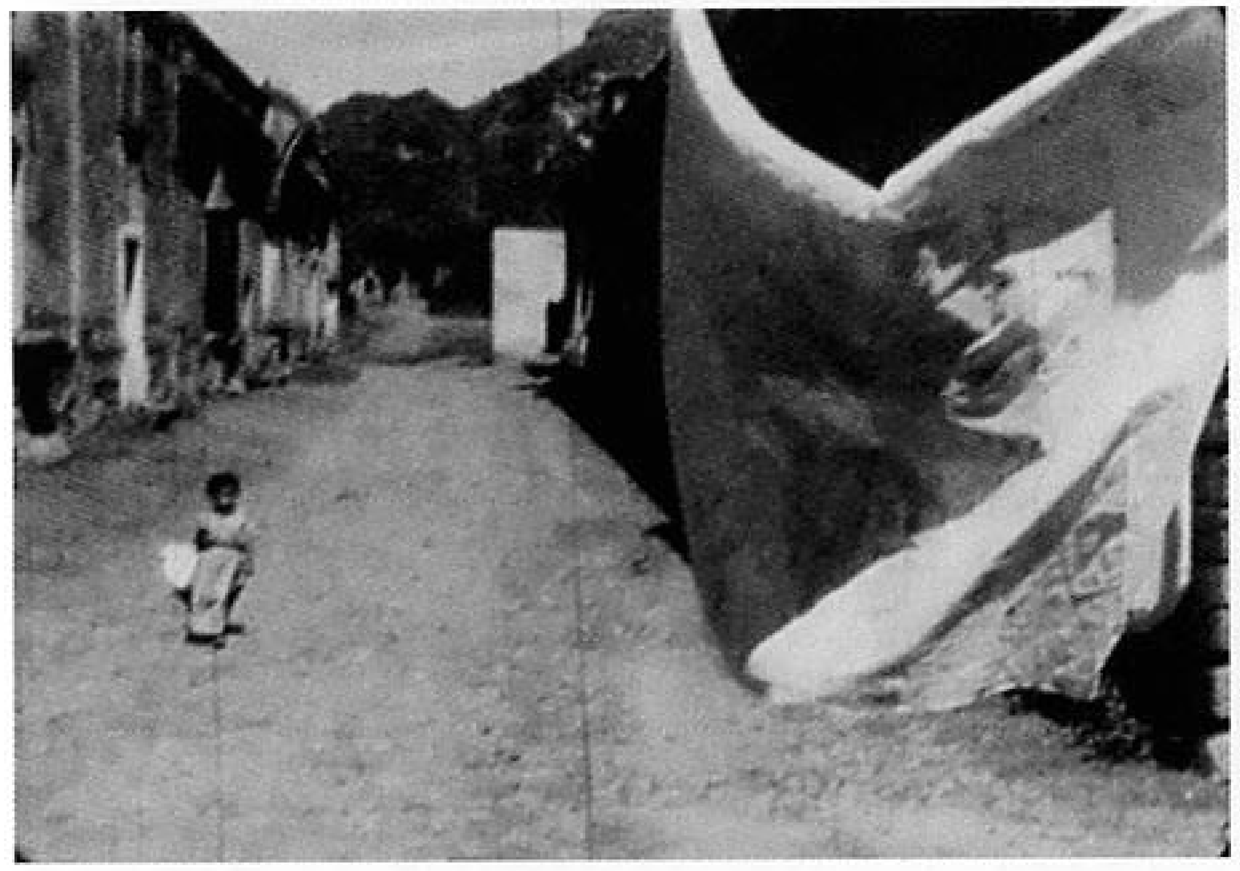
Atmosphere is, by definition, a vague and elusive concept, denoting that which permeates the cinematic narrative while remaining invisible on-screen. Yet Tarkovsky spoke of it as if it was empirically verifiable, saying for instance that Dovzhenko was 'the first practitioner for whom the problem of atmosphere was particularly important' (*ATI* 21). Atmosphere does not represent anything, nor is it in itself a presence. It is approachable only as the mood or attunement of the images, their mode of presentation. Vadim Iusov helpfully defined atmosphere as 'man interacting with the environment'.[2]

Tarkovsky gave one of his clearest definitions of atmosphere apropos of *Stalker*:

> [The film] does not surprise and does not entertain the spectator with unexpected shifts of action and the plot. This, in my view, will help the spectator to see more fully the great ability and poetic essence of cinema – to peer into the pseudo-mundane flow of life. It is not necessary to create atmosphere on purpose. It appears itself out of the task which the author resolves. If the task is commensurate to this, of course. Atmosphere appears as a result of the ability to concentrate on what's most important.[3]

In related comments Tarkovsky underscored that 'it is necessary to eliminate any vague or unspoken elements, everything that is usually called the "poetic atmosphere" [which] people usually try diligently and intentionally to create on screen'.[4] In *Stalker*, Tarkovsky continued: 'I am trying to focus on the main thing, and then, I suppose, will arise an atmosphere that is more active and emotionally more infectious than it has been thus far in my films.' Perhaps to an even greater degree, in *Sacrifice* it is Tarkovsky's focus on the image that invests (or 'infects'?) the material world with an atmosphere of potentiality.

In *Sacrifice* the elements of cinema seem especially attuned to those of nature. The earth that has been appropriated for dwelling is under continual threat; the shrine that Alexander erects out of driftwood testifies as much to the absence of life as to its potentiality. The house contains an entire world of signifiers – from Leonardo's painting to the old map that Otto gives Alexander, from the Japanese music to the threatening TV news – all of which are completely consumed in Alexander's fiery sacrifice. The long take seems to borrow its majestic indifference from the sea, which throughout has been observing the drama as it develops. The question



'The breath of plague' in Luis Buñuel's *Nazarín* (1959).

that remains at the end of the film – as in all of Tarkovsky's œuvre – concerns the possibility that water may once again serve to sustain life on this earth. But everything hinges on the fragile breath of the little boy, alone under the immense, blank sky. The narrative of Alexander calls to mind Tarkovsky's observation (quoting Pushkin) that 'the breath of plague' pervades Luis Buñuel's *Nazarín* (ST 73, ZV 174). However, it also recalls Tarkovsky's description of how Bach's music opens 'a kind of vacuum, an empty space, where the spectator feels the possibility of filling the spiritual void and feeling the breath of an ideal'.[5] Just as the consumption of the house by flame frees the son to fashion his own future, in a place he will reclaim from nature, so the consumption of the film detaches the spectator from its own specific configuration and returns him to the world renewed and empowered.

At the centre of *Sacrifice* is a family of the theatre; both Adelaide and Alexander are former actors, and now Alexander is a well-regarded theatre critic and teacher of aesthetics. When Alexander awakens after the night of apocalypse it is his editor that he calls to check on the existence of the world, as if the theatre (or literature more generally) were his only substantive link to the world outside. In their birthday salutations Alexander's colleagues call him Richard and Prince Myshkin, apparently in memory of his final roles.

Dostoevsky is palpable throughout, but the undercurrent of Shakespearean tragedy is especially strong. In the midst of his philosophical diatribe Alexander exclaims (in English): 'Words, words, words.' Like

Hamlet in Tarkovsky's interpretation, Alexander continually feels compelled towards an act that he finds repugnant. However, Alexander's reaction to the model house betrays more the guilty conscience of a Claudius (in the scene of *The Mousetrap*) than the accusatory zeal of Hamlet; he quotes (again in English) from *Macbeth*: 'Which of you have done this? The Lords' (III. iv. 49). It is curious that, while the question is posed by Macbeth upon the appearance of the ghost of Banquo, the last two words are actually the stage direction identifying the next speakers. (Since they cannot see the ghost the lords answer: 'What, my good lord?') It is as if Alexander is conjuring up his own 'lords', in the hope of receiving a response to his usurpation of power. It is clear that Alexander's guilt lies far in the recesses of the past, perhaps in the very construction of the house and the establishment of its household. Adelaide implies that Alexander brought her from London to this desolate spit of land on false pretences, since she did not know he would relinquish his theatrical stardom. Perhaps (following the link to Macbeth) this stardom was won at the cost of vanquished rivals. We are not told, but still the temporal depth of the family drama is achieved less by the layering of images (as in *Mirror* or *Nostalghia*) than in the characters' verbal and physical gestures, and it is augmented by meta-theatrical rather than meta-visual references.

Tarkovsky consistently attested to his desire to observe the three unities, characterizing the style of *Sacrifice* as more 'dramatic' than in his previous films; in this, as in other respects, it is closest to *Stalker*. The main characters form two sets: Alexander and Otto (and Maria) on the one hand, Victor and the three other women on the other. The leaders of the two groups are both contemplating a sacrifice: Alexander will destroy his household, while Victor will relinquish his numerous romantic liaisons and social position and emigrate to Australia. The two men are repeatedly brought into parallel situations; after the announcement of the crisis, for instance, Alexander is shown plying Otto with brandy, while Victor administers a sedative to Adelaide and Marta. All of the possessions and images in the house are implicated in the interpersonal relationships; even Alexander's book of icons, a ray of light in the gloomy twilight, is a present from Victor and thus tainted by his betrayal. The main bone of contention is the boy, who silently regards his hapless elders as they make impossible claims upon him. Crucially, though, the boy never enters the main space of contention on the ground floor of the house, appearing only in his bed and on the land outside. His gaze is as yet unable to hold the family together.

The camera plays a much more active role in exploring and exploding the spaces of the house. For one thing, the camera is complicit in heightening the film's theatricality. With the exception of the nightmare and Maria's dwelling, it limits itself to the house and its immediate environs. In no other film does Tarkovsky have such sustained scenes with a stationary camera, for instance in the shots of the child's crib or of Alexander's sofa. Especially in scenes with Otto – when he presents Alexander with the map, or when he implores Alexander to sleep with Maria – the characters execute an elaborate dance in order to keep the action framed before and towards the camera. At times it is as if Tarkovsky is intent on renouncing one of his greatest gifts: that of the mobile camera. Yet these aesthetic renunciations culminate in one of Tarkovsky's richest, most indulgent long takes. Just as this long take redeems the cinema, so *Sacrifice* overall redeems the image as a site of mediation.

The fate of the image in the film is most closely linked to the figure of Otto, the only true outsider in the house (even Maria, an Icelander who lives separately, is part of the household). Only Otto expands Alexander's world beyond the walls of the house, delivering the congratulatory telegram from his colleagues and presenting him with an eighteenth-century map of Europe. In this respect he fulfils his vocation as postman by exercising the power of mediation. He also provides the bicycle that Alexander (and later Maria) uses to escape the confines of the house. As G. K. Chesterton showed in his story 'The Invisible Man' (1911), the ubiquitous postman melts unseen into the landscape of modernity. It is, perhaps, this inconspicuousness that allows Otto to discover and investigate the supernatural occurrences he collects. But Otto is also an actor of sorts, as he shows when he takes a theatrical tumble off his bicycle and feigns slapstick anger for the little boy. At times there is something Chaplinesque about his movements, as if Otto were intent on turning Alexander's inward drama into a film.

Otto and Alexander's relationship is continually channelled through images, though Alexander is oddly numb to their appeal. While Otto stresses that the map is an original, Alexander seems to reject the very idea of an original image, exclaiming: 'This Europe is like Mars; it has nothing in common with reality.' Alexander says that he quit acting because he was no longer able to depict characters. When Otto has trouble seeing Leonardo's *Adoration*, Alexander explains that it is merely a copy under glass, therefore devoid of texture. Yet Otto is so sensitive that he recoils in horror at the Leonardo copy (stating a preference for Piero della Francesca, whose *Madonna del Parto* featured in *Nostalghia*). Otto also helps the child create the scale model of the house, which frightens Alexander as if the physical re-duplication of his house has undermined its sanctity. Finally, Otto tells the story of the photographic portrait of a woman, taken in 1960, which when developed included her son as he looked in an undeveloped photograph taken just before his death in 1940. This story suggests a concept of the imaginary as a parallel reality in which images (even undeveloped, potential ones) bleed into each other, nullifying 'objective' space and time. If for Alexander (a professor of aesthetics!) images could aspire only to be mere reproductions of other images (and not, for instance, of the house or of human feelings), for Otto they are more real than the things themselves.

The model house (*Sacrifice*).

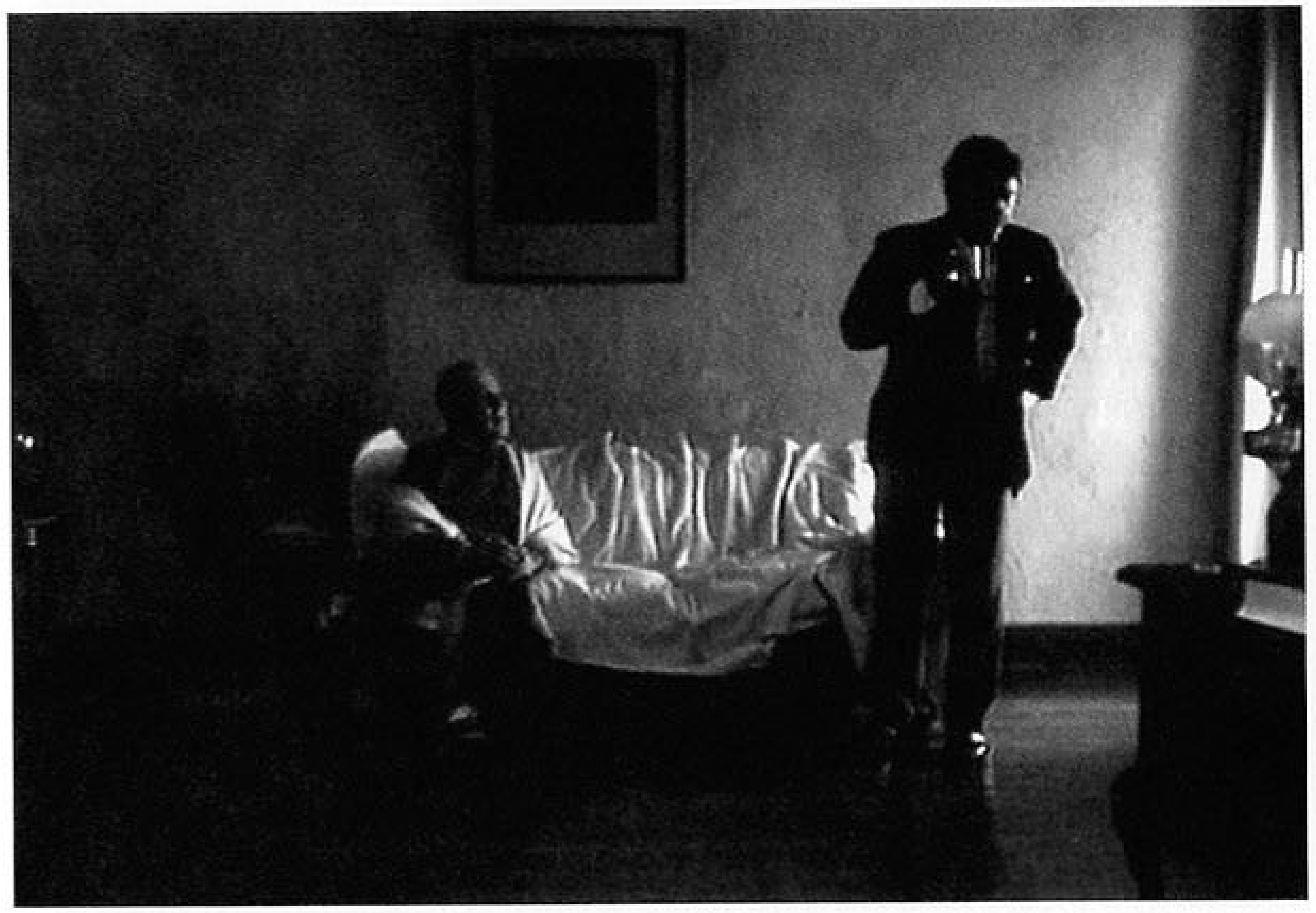
The tension between Otto and Alexander reflects a broader tension in the film between Otto's faith in the imaginary and Alexander's search for a more palpable and final redemption. It is not just that Otto sympathizes with the idea of eternal return. In response to Otto's Nietzschean musings, Alexander rejects any possibility of creating an intellectual 'model' of the universe, which he says would be tantamount to becoming the demiurge of a separate creation. Otto answers by paraphrasing Scripture: 'Faith has been granted you, and it will be in proportion to your faith' (cf. Romans 12: 3, 6). Indeed, Otto provides the only hints of the supernatural in the film, with his collection of 284 uncanny stories, the sudden loss of consciousness which he attributes to the touch of a 'fallen angel', and the idea that Maria is a witch. His rather sinister character ensures that his views are not identified with Tarkovsky's own; indeed, to a significant degree Otto foils the very conception that Tarkovsky was ostensibly pursuing in the film: that of a total renunciation. Instead, Otto ensures that the cleansing flames do not just consume all Alexander's accumulated images, but also allow for the reconstitution of an imaginary. Its architecture and armature may be dramatic, but the effect of *Sacrifice* is produced by the purely cinematic intensity of overlapping visions and crossed gazes in which the spectator is also enmeshed.

Sacrifice holds true to Tarkovsky's tripartite poetics of space: nature, home and shrine. The fragile membrane of the house is breached by the elements, just as the house in *Solaris* is invaded by the rain, and that in *Mirror* is buffeted by fire and wind. When burnt, the space will remain hallowed ground, a shrine to the time that has passed through it. In fact, the house has perhaps already ceased to be a home, as is demonstrated by the schism between upstairs and downstairs. The small grove of trees near the house is already a kind of shrine to it: in this grove Alexander has his first vision, finds a model of his house and encounters Maria, his putative saviour. The very walls of the house, though intended to preserve it from the elements, are woven as if from light and air; the drama is to some degree a battle to define and constitute the boundaries of the house as those of vision itself.

It is not just that Alexander must repeatedly steal into and out of the house in order to carry out his plan, or that Victor has brazenly violated its hallowed spaces with his adultery. It is the very elements that constantly invade the habitation, as marked by the in-blowing curtains and the harsh light that drastically changes the colour scheme indoors. Whenever the protagonists approach the windows they are cast in high contrast, similar to an old TV screen or a grainy black-and-white photograph, as if the very movement to the perimeter bleeds the image of its vitality. The home, it turns out, depends less on its physical walls than on its central location in the economy of the human gaze; it is where people regard each other (and themselves) with the utmost intensity. Tellingly, Alexander's resolve to destroy the physical edifice coincides with his ceasing to see and be seen by others.

The folds in space emerge already at the beginning of the film when Alexander settles in the small grove of trees and loses himself in philosophical ruminations, ostensibly addressed to his little son, who has wandered off frame. The tracking of the camera through the trees suggests an alien presence, as does the mysterious sound of a female voice, which seems carried on the wind that rustles in the grass. Alexander becomes conscious of his son's absence, appears frightened by the now sinister space of the grove, and calls out for him. However, when the boy runs up behind him, Alexander throws him to the ground, giving him a nosebleed. Alexander himself falls to the ground and we are shown (in black and white) a desolate asphalted courtyard, strewn with debris and crossed by a stream of water. The sound of running water on the soundtrack supports the objectivity of the vision, but the continuing strains of the eerie female voice undercut this integrity, uniting Alexander's grove and the post-apocalyptic cityscape into a single location. As the camera pans down, it encounters a sheet of glass, stained with paint or with blood, which reflects a city skyline upside down. The next shot (again in colour) shows Alexander leafing through an album of Russian icons. The sequence is quite reminiscent of episode 4 in *Andrei Rublëv*, when Andrei's vision of the blinding of the mason allows him to overcome his block by staining the wall with ashes, after which he is able to imagine and depict the *Last Judgment*. As in *Andrei Rublëv*, fragmented space can be stitched up only by a continuous gaze that crosses all the riven spaces and orders of reality.

In Lacanian terms, one might speak of a crisis in the imaginary being resolved by a restoration of the symbolic; however,Tarkovsky's interest remains with the concrete image that mediates this divide. The spaces and gazes cross most intensely in the plate glass of the windows and of the Leonardo painting that hangs in Alexander's room. As Maria leaves the grove where Alexander has discovered the model house, the strains of a Japanese bamboo flute usher in a new sequence, which begins with the boy awakening in his crib and hearkening to a knock at the door and the voices of Alexander and Otto. The conversation continues as we see a tree reflected in the glass over the Leonardo, which cuts to a shot of Otto and Alexander contemplating the painting. Otto recoils in horror at it and recedes to the back of the frame, behind a glass door, where he is cast in harsh light. The glass becomes visible because it faintly reflects Alexander and is steamed up by Otto's breath. True to his role, Otto makes palpable the very space of mediation, the



Otto and Alexander at the sofa (*Sacrifice*).

material (if invisible) atmosphere that sustains vision and the entire life of the imaginary. If the wine glasses most unmistakeably register the threat of the aeroplanes, so also the plate glass, functioning as both window and mirror, registers the tense crossing of gazes that alone is capable of reconstituting the human community.

The glass over the painting may bring Alexander and Otto together into a single space, but it is powerless to unite the family that by and large has ceased paying attention. After catching his reflection in the painting Alexander walks to the cabinet and shuts off the Japanese music, at which point the voice of the head of government becomes clearly audible from the television set in the room downstairs. The rest of the characters are arranged in a circle before the flickering set, bathed in the eerie light that emanates from it. As Alexander approaches, the camera begins a pan from Otto back past all of the other characters. The telephone starts ringing upstairs, but all gazes are on the TV, although only Alexander seems to notice when the feed is cut. Their static disparateness is disrupted only when Otto approaches first Adelaide and then Marta; both brush him off and turn to Victor: 'At least you can do something', Adelaide cries (in English). She then calls for 'little man', the boy with whom the episode began. Victor tries the telephone and discovers that their lines of communication have gone dead, though the characters still refuse to look at each other. Perhaps only the little boy's gaze is capable of holding the world together; but he lies asleep upstairs. The camera manifests fluid continuity only to underscore the jarring discontinuities within the domestic space.

Otto and Alexander in the painting (*Sacrifice*).

The soundtrack is also full of incongruities that undermine any confidence one might achieve concerning the narrative. For a fleeting second the static from the television seems to resolve itself into the sound of the bamboo flute. Other unexplained sounds – at times close to a drum roll, at times like a coin rolling across the floor – disrupt the fabric of the event. Maria's mysteriousness can be attributed in part to her musical motif, the Swedish folk singing that appears in the grove

Otto and Alexander at the window (*Sacrifice*).

and in Alexander's dreams, leading him out of his own house, through the flooded plain to (what we later learn to be) Maria's house. The dream ends with the sound of jets flying overhead, but is the sound the culmination of the dream or the commencement of waking reality? The confusion of dream and consciousness is exacerbated when Otto appears and, in a conversation mediated by the glass door, tells Alexander to sleep with Maria.

This is the moment when the psychological drama takes a markedly supernatural turn, and when the dreams begin to look very much like visions. Alexander's third and last dream begins (in black and white) while he and Maria are locked in passionate embrace, levitating above her bed. The Swedish folk singing is overlaid with bamboo flute, as the image (in harsh contrast) switches first to the crowd in the city courtyard, the stained glass pane and Alexander's son, who lies asleep or, perhaps, dead. This is followed by a shot of Maria in the guise of Adelaide. Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi*, shown in changing light, dissolves into a colour shot of the naked Marta, who chases chickens through the house; the shot tracks right, following Adelaide, who moves along the corridor to the room where Alexander sleeps on the sofa beneath the Leonardo. He awakens, exclaims 'Mama', rises and shuts off the Japanese music, which lingers, however, for a fleeting second. Encouraged, Alexander calls the office of his editor to confirm that the world is still standing; the persistence of material reality is confirmed when Alexander knocks his knee against the table, incurring real pain and a limp that lasts for the remainder of the film. The viewer might be tempted similarly to classify the foregoing sequence as Alexander's dream. However, there are any number of spatial folds that prevent it from being dismissed so easily. As it comes apart the space is suspended as the point of intersection of human gazes, not as a ruin, but as the site of potentiality.

One returns to the image of Otto and Alexander speaking through the glass door. It is easy enough to dismiss what Otto says about the mysterious photograph, the mystical terror of Leonardo's canvas, or the idea of Maria being a witch, just as one can explain away the otherworldly visitor in *Mirror* or the materialization of Hoffmann's mirror reflection in 'Hoffmanniana' (*CS* 334). What remains inexplicable in all three works is the material trace left behind by the supernatural image, its very condensation on the mediating surface. This is the uncanniness noted by Walter Benjamin in the very medium of photography:

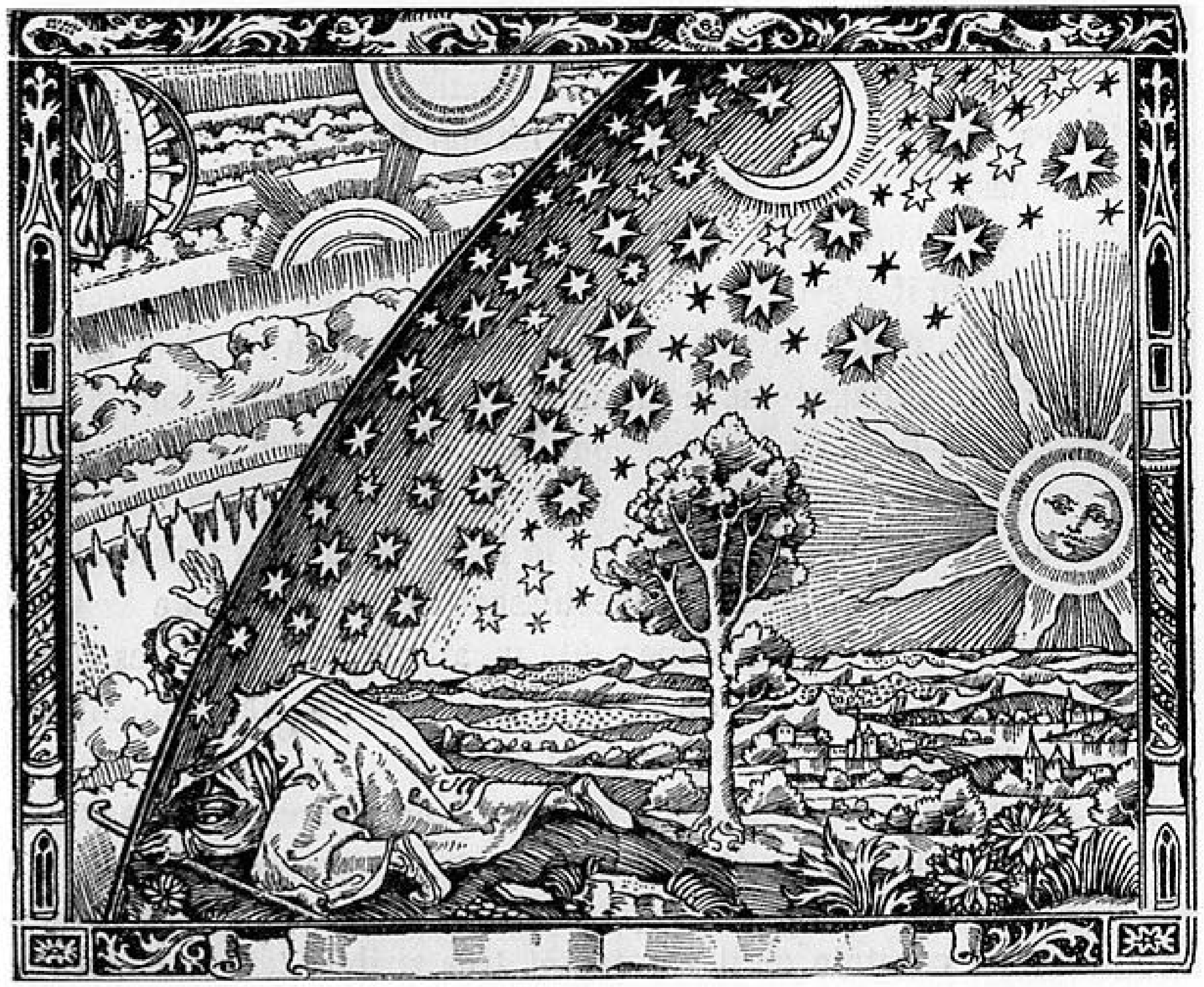
> No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search [the] picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now, with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it.[6]

In Otto's story the woman's photograph is seared with the lost future of her son, while the son's image, too, is singed by the mother's future loneliness. The very determinacy of these moments imprints the intangible tension with which memory and contingency constantly afflict visible reality. Quite apart from Otto's claims concerning the supernatural, the photographic medium is revealed to be uncanny and troubling in its very realism. So too the power of Tarkovsky's films, preposterous in their conception and contrived in their images, is that they render palpable the very texture of mediation, making corporeality ineffable and fantasy unmistakably material, presenting potentiality as fact. It is here, on the screen, that the elements of cinema restore the basic elements of life.

In his book *L'Atmosphère: météorologie populaire* (1888), French amateur scientist and popular writer Camille Flammarion included a woodcut in the sixteenth-century German style depicting the Ptolemaic universe, with the earth surrounded by a sphere consisting of air, fire and water. The earth appears to the wayfarer as a fragile construct, suspended amidst the flows of the three other elements, always in danger of disintegration. Seeking a more basic ground, the wayfarer peers into the outer sphere.

This woodcut, of unknown origin (Flammarion may have fashioned it himself), has proved so emblematic of the modern condition that it repeatedly resurfaced throughout the twentieth century. It has been suggested that it could be a source of the ending of *The Truman Show* (1998), where Jim Carrey's character bumps up against the border of the television set on which he has lived his life. In his novel *Dzhan* (1935) Andrei Platonov emplotted the image into a diptych that relates a small allegorical narrative:

> The picture depicted a dream when the earth was considered flat and the sky close by. In it some large man had stood upon the earth, punched a hole with his head in the heavenly dome which



Woodcut in Camille Flammarion's *L'Atmosphere*, 1988.

> opened out onto the strange infinity of that time, and had gazed into it. And he looked for so long into the unknown, foreign space that he forgot about his remaining body which remained beneath the usual sky. The other half of the picture depicted the same view but in a different state. The man's torso had become exhausted, emaciated, and had probably died, while his dried-out head had rolled down into that world, along the outer surface of the sky, which looked like a tin tub; it was the head of a seeker after a new infinity where there really would be no end and whence there would be no return to the bare, flat place of the earth.[7]

Platonov seems to warn against extending one's gaze beyond 'the usual sky' because such investigation loses any meaning if it becomes detached from somatic existence. Only at the very border does the atmosphere allow the wayfarer to reconcile vision with physical existence.

Tarkovsky, as I understand him, is conscious of Platonov's admonition. He treasured the security of standing firmly on the earth – in social and professional systems, in aesthetic and spiritual tradition, and in the spaces of home and nature; he spoke frequently of representing a stable identity on such earthy bases. But as a filmmaker his central interest and commitment was the role of the image, especially the cinematic image, in mediating this relationship between individual experience and the material world. Language, narrative and the entire imaginary (both of society and the individual) form configurations in which a body can elaborate an identity and join the flow of history; yet Tarkovsky felt that these configurations could be genuine only if they were subjected to the flame of time, which resists fluid representation and disrupts space with unexpected folds. In a complex weave of synchronizations, Tarkovsky sewed the visible world with seams of time, blocking our desire for continuity with a sensorial resistance that foregrounds the material intervention of the medium itself. Ultimately, like the firmament in Flammarion's woodcut, the screen offers the potential of reconstituting the very conditions of experience, of reconstituting time itself, amidst the crossing of gazes and material forces.

Chronology

1932	Born 4 April in the village of Zavrazh'e on the River Volga to Maria Ivanovna Vishniakova and Arsenii Aleksandrovich Tarkovsky.
1934	Sister Marina born on 3 October.
1937	Arsenii Tarkovsky leaves his family.
1951	Finishes school and enters Institute of Oriental Languages (Moscow) to study Arabic.
1953	Leaves the Institute of Oriental Languages and travels to Eastern Siberia with a geological expedition.
1954	Enters Institute of Cinematography ('VGIK', Moscow) and is assigned to director Mikhail Romm.
1956	*The Killers* (with Aleksandr Gordon and Maria Beiku).
1957	Marries Irma Rausch. Works on *The Two Fëdors* (director Marlen Khutsiev).
1958	*There Will Be No Leave Today* (with Aleksandr Gordon).
1959	Writes the screenplay 'The Antarctic, a Distant Land' with Andron Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky and Oleg Osetinsky.
1961	*Steamroller and Violin.* Graduates from the Institute of Cinematography and begins employment as a director at Mosfilm studios.
1962	*Ivan's Childhood.* In the autumn travels to Venice and San Francisco Film Festivals to receive prizes. Also travels to India and Ceylon to show the film. Son Arsenii born 30 September.
1963	Becomes a member of the Union of Cinematographers of the USSR.
1964	Member of the jury at the Sixteenth Festival of Children's Films in Venice. *Andrei Rublëv* begins production.

1965	Records an adaptation of William Faulkner's 'Turnabout' for radio.
1966	*Andrei Rublëv* completed in September (as *The Passion according to Andrei*) but rejected by Mosfilm.
1967	With Aleksandr Misharin begins work on the screenplay 'Confession', which is later renamed 'White Day' and 'Mirror'.
1969	Wins Jury Prize at Cannes for *Andrei Rublëv.*
1970	April, begins keeping his diary, entitled 'Martyrology'. Marries Larisa Kizilova (neé Egorkina). Son Andrei born in August. Publishes story 'White Day'.
1971	*Andrei Rublëv* released in the USSR.
1972	*Solaris* released, receiving two major prizes at Cannes.
1973	Writes the screenplay 'Ariel (Light Wind)' with Fridrikh Gorenshtein. Shoots *Mirror.*
1974	*Mirror* completed and approved for limited release.
1975	Writes the screenplay 'Hoffmanniana'.
1977	Premiere in February of *Hamlet* at the Theatre of the Lenin Komsomol (Moscow). Begins shooting *Stalker.*
1978	Writes the screenplay 'Sardor' with Aleksandr Misharin.
1979	*Stalker* released. Receives three major prizes for *Stalker* at Cannes. Writes screenplay for *Beware, Snakes!* Mother dies on 5 October.
1980	Named 'People's Artist of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic'. In March, speaks at All-Union Meeting of Cinema Workers (Moscow). Spends April–September in Italy at work with Tonino Guerra on the screenplay 'Nostalghia'.
1982	*Time of Travel* made with Tonino Guerra for Italian television.
1983	*Nostalghia* released. At Cannes receives three major prizes, including a joint award for best direction with Robert Bresson (for *Argent*). In May is sacked from Mosfilm for unauthorized absence. Stages *Boris Godunov* at the Royal Opera House (Covent Garden).
1984	10 July, at a news conference in Milan declares that he will not return to the USSR. Speaks on the Apocalypse and conducts public discussion at the St James's Festival (London). Begins work on *Sacrifice.*
1985	Shoots *Sacrifice* in Sweden. December, diagnosed with lung cancer.
1986	Edits *Sacrifice* from hospital bed with Michał Leszczyłowski. At Cannes receives three major prizes for *Sacrifice.* 29 December, dies in a Paris clinic. Buried 3 January 1987 at the cemetery of Saint-Genevieve-de-Bois in Paris.

References

In the text I use a simplified version of the Library of Congress transliteration (thus Tarkovsky), but in the References, for the sake of accuracy, I use a more precise version of Library of Congress (thus Tarkovskii). For published translations in the References I follow the spellings given in the publications.

Introduction: Elements of Cinema

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8 Slavoj Žižek, 'The Thing from Inner Space', in *Sexuation*, ed. Renata Salecl (Durham, NC, and London, 2000), p. 242.
9 Aleksei German, 'Vysokaia prostota', *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 6 (1990), p. 100.
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12 B. M. Eikhenbaum, *Literatura: teoriia, kritika, polemika* (Leningrad, 1927), p. 297.
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14 See Alexander Bakshy, *The Path of the Modern Russian Stage and Other Essays* (Boston, MA, 1918).
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1: The System

1 Andrei Tarkovskii, 'Interv'iu gazete "Put' k ekranu"', in *Andrei Tarkovskii: Nachalo . . . i puti (vospominaniia, interv'iu, lektsii, stat'i)*, ed. M. Rostotskaia (Moscow, 1994) p. 38.
2 N. Nikitin, 'Dlia menia kino – eto sposob dostich' kakoi-to istiny', *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (3 April 1988), p. 4.
3 Rostislav Iurenev, 'Kotoryi mal'chik – eto Andrei', *Andrei Tarkovskii: Nachalo . . . i puti*, p. 16.
4 Aleksandr Gordon, 'Peresecheniia', OT, pp. 437, 444–5.
5 Rostislav Iurenev, 'Kotoryi mal'chik – eto Andrei', p. 21.
6 Discussion of *Steamroller and Violin* (6 January 1961); RGALI 2453.4.1339, p. 5. In the subtitles to the Facets DVD of *Steamroller and Violin* Bakhmet'eva is misidentified as the author of the original story; in fact the screenplay was the original work of Tarkovsky and Konchalovsky.
7 Discussion of *Steamroller and Violin* (6 January 1961); RGALI 2453.4.1339, pp. 30, 34.
8 Ibid., p. 21.
9 Ibid., p. 14.
10 Ibid., p. 29.
11 Ibid., p. 61.
12 Ibid., p. 46.
13 Ibid., p. 49.
14 Ibid., pp. 53, 61.
15 Ibid., p. 66.
16 Ibid., p. 67.
17 CS 15; translation adjusted according to: *Steamroller and Violin*, RGALI 2453.5.1116, p. 5.
18 *Steamroller and Violin*, RGALI 2453.5.1116, p. 2.
19 On this term and its application to Tarkovsky, see Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis, MN, 1986), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta, p. 75.
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21 *Ivan's Childhood* dossier (9 September 1959–20 April 1963); RGALI 2453.4.351, p. 83. See also Rostislav Iurenev, 'Kotoryi mal'chik – eto Andrei', p. 21.
22 *Ivan's Childhood* dossier, p. 115.
23 Ibid., p. 116. This is, of course, inaccurate; Tarkovsky had just turned ten in July 1941.
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27 Ibid., p. 33. Various versions exist of the final sequence, with and without the charred corpses (which are identified as those of Goebbels' family).

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34 Tarkovsky and Konchalovsky, *Beginnings and Ways*, 1963; RGALI 2453.4.118, p. ii.

35 Ibid., p. vi.

36 Transcript of a meeting of the Artistic Council of the [Sixth Creative] Unit to discuss the literary scenario *Beginnings and Ways* by A. S. Konchalovsky and A. A. Tarkovsky (28 April 1963); RGALI 2453.5.1272, p. 69.

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4 Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Pered novymi zadachami', *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 7 (1997), p. 117.

5 Ibid., p. 116.

6 Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, eds Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings and Gary Smith, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA, 1999), p. 510.

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Filmography/Credits

1. Films directed by Andrei Tarkovsky

The Killers (*Ubiitsy*), 1956, 19 min. Black and white

Production Company: VGIK (All-Union State Institute of Cinematograph), **Director:** Marika Beiku, Aleksandr Gordon, Andrei Tarkovsky, **Screenplay:** Aleksandr Gordon, A. Tarkovsky, based on a story by Ernest Hemingway, **Photography:** A. Rybin, A. Al'veres

Starring Iulii Fait (Nick Adams), Aleksandr Gordon (George), Iurii Dubrovin (first customer), Valentin Vinogradov (Al), Vadim Novikov (Max), Andrei Tarkovsky (second customer), Vasilii Shukshin (Ole Andreson)

There Will Be No Leave Today (*Segodnia uvol'neniia ne budet*), 1958, 47 min. Black and white

Production Company: The Training Studio of VGIK and the Central Television Studio **Producer:** A. Ia. Kotoshev, **Screenplay:** A. Gordon, I. Makhova, A. Tarkovsky **Director:** A. Gordon, A. Tarkovsky, under the supervision of A. Zhigalko and E. N. Foss in the course of M. I. Romm, **Assistant to Director:** A. Kuptsova, **Cameramen:** L. Bunin, E. Iakovlev, under the supervision of K. M. Vents, **Assistant to cameramen:** V. Ponamarev, **Composer:** Iu. Matskevich, **Sound:** O. Polisonov, **Art Director:** S. Peterson, **Military consultant:** Lieutenant-Colonel I. I. Sklifus

Starring O. Borisov (Captain Galich), A. Alekseev (Colonel Gvelesiani), P. Liubeshkin (Vershinin), O. Moshkantsev (Vishniakov), V. Marenkov (Vasin), I. Kosukhin (Tsignadze), L. Kuravlev (Morozov), S. Liubshin (Sadovnikov), A. Smirnov (man in cowboy shirt), A. Dobronravov (Dr. Kuz'min), I. Golovina (Galich's wife)

Steamroller and Violin (*Katok i skripka*), 1961, 46 min. Colour (Sovcolour)

Production Company: Mosfilm (Creative Unit for the Production of Children's Films)
Producer: A. Karetin, **Director:** Andrei Tarkovsky, **Assistant Director:** O. Gerts, **Script:** Andron Konchalovsky, Andrei Tarkovsky, **Photography:** Vadim Iusov, **Editing:** L. Butuzova
Script editor: S. Bakhmet'eva, **Art Director:** S. Agoian, **Special effects photography:** B. Pluzhnikov, V. Sevost'ianov, **Special effects design:** A. Rudachenko, **Conductor:** E. Khachaturian, **Music:** Viacheslav Ovchinnikov, **Costumes:** A. Martinson, **Sound:** V. Krachkovsky, **Make-up:** A. Makashova

Starring: Igor' Fomchenko (Sasha), Vladimir Zamansky (Sergei), Natal'ia Arkhangel'skaia (girl), Marina Adzhubei (mother)
Supporting cast: Iura Brusser, Slava Borisov, Sasha Vitoslavsky, Sasha Il'in, Kolia Kozyrev, Gena Kliachkovsky, Igor' Korovikov, Zhenia Fedchenko, Tania Prokhorova, A. Maksimova, L. Semenova, G. Zhdanova, M. Figner

Ivan's Childhood/My Name Is Ivan (*Ivanovo detstvo*), 1962, 95 min.
Black and white

Production Company: Mosfilm (Second Creative Unit 'Time'), **Producer:** G. Kuznetsov, **Director:** Andrei Tarkovsky, **Assistant Director:** G. Natanson, **Screenplay:** Mikhail Papava, Vladimir Bogomolov, based on the story 'Ivan' by Vladimir Bogomolov, **Photography:** Vadim Iusov, **Editing:** Liudmila Feiginova, **Art Director:** Evgenii Cherniaev, **Special effects photography:** V. Sevost'ianov, **Special effects design:** S. Mukhin, **Screenplay editor:** E. Smirnov, **Conductor:** E. Khachaturian, **Composer:** Viacheslav Ovchinnikov, **Sound:** I. Zelentsova, **Make-up:** L. Baskakova, **Military adviser:** Colonel G. Goncharov

Starring: Kolia Burliaev (Ivan), Valentin Zubkov (Captain Kholin), E. Zharikov (Lieutenant Galtsev), S. Krylov (Corporal Katasonych), Nikolai Grin'ko (Griaznov), V. Maliavina (Masha), Irina Tarkovskaia (Ivan's mother), D. Miliutenko (old man with hen)
Supporting cast: A. Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, I. Savkin, V. Marenkov, Vera Miturich

Andrei Rublëv, 1969 (USSR release 1971), 185 min.
Original version: *The Passion according to Andrei* (*Strasti po Andreiu*), 1966, 205 min.
Black and white and colour (Sovcolour), Cinemascope

Production Company: Mosfilm (Sixth Creative Unit of Writers and Cinema Workers), **Director:** Andrei Tarkovsky, **Producer:** Tamara Ogorodnikova, **Assistant Director:** I. Petrov
Intern Director: B. Oganesian, **Assistants to the director:** A. Macheret, M. Volovich, A. Nikolaev, **Script:** Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, Andrei Tarkovsky, **Director of photography:** Vadim Iusov, **Photography:** V. Sevost'ianov, assisted by L. Andrianov, R. Ruvinov, P. Sudilin, **Special effects design:** E. Korablev, assisted by T. Isaeva, L. Pertsev, **Editing:** L. Feiginova, T. Egorycheva, O. Shevkunenko, **Screenplay editors:** N. Beliaeva, L. Lazarev, **Art Director:** Evgenii Cherniaev, assisted by I. Novoderezhkin and S. Voronkov, **Special effects photography:** Viacheslav Sevost'ianov, **Special effects design:** P. Safonov, **Composer:** Viacheslav Ovchinnikov, **Costumes:** L. Novi, M. Abar-Baranovskaia, **Sound:** I. Zelentsova, **Make-up:** V. Rudina, M. Aliautdinov, S. Barsukov, **Advisers:** Dr V. Pashuto, S. Iamshchikov, M. Mertsalova

Starring: Anatolii Solonitsyn (Andrei Rublëv), Ivan Lapikov (Kirill), Nikolai Grin'ko (Daniil Chernyi), Nikolai Sergeev (Feofan Grek), Nikolai Burliaev (Boriska), Iurii Nazarov (Great Prince, Little Prince), Irma Raush ('Durochka' – The Fool), Iu. Nikulin (Patrikei), R. Bykov (Jester), N. Grabbe (Stepan), M. Kononov (Foma), S. Krylov (Head Bell-founder), B. Beishenaliev (Mongol khan), B. Matysik (Petr), A. Obukhov, Volodia Titov
Supporting cast: N. Glazkov (Efim), K. Aleksandrov, S. Bardin, I. Bykov, G. Borisovsky, V. Vasil'ev, Z. Vorkul', A. Titov, V. Volkov, I. Miroshnichenko (Mary Magdelene), T. Ogorodnikova (Mary, Mother of Christ), N. Radolitskaia, N. Kutuzov (Old Mason), D. Orlovsky, V. Gus'kov, I. Donskoi, I. Ryskulov, T. Makarov, G. Sachevko, N. Snegina (Marfa), G. Pokorsky, A. Umuraliev, Slava Tsarev

Solaris (*Soliaris*), 1972, 169 min. Colour (Sovcolour), Cinemascope

Production Company: Mosfilm, **Production Supervisor:** Viacheslav Tarasov
Director: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Assistant Director:** Yu. Kushnerev, assisted by A. Ides, L. Tarkovskaia, M. Chugunova, **Intern Director:** N. Mann, **Screenplay:** Fridrikh Gorenshtein, Andrei Tarkovsky, based on the novel *Solaris* by Stanisław Lem, **Photography:** Vadim Iusov, **Editing:** L. Feiginova, **Screenplay editors:** N. Boiarova, L. Lazarev, **Art Director:** Mikhail Romadin, **Sound:** Semen Litvinov, **Camera operator:** E. Shvedov, assisted by Iu. Nevsky, V. Shmyga, **Special effects:** V. Sevost'ianov, **Special effects design:** A. Klimenko, **Composer:** Eduard Artem'ev, additional music by J. S. Bach, **Set design:** S. Gavrilov, V. Prokof'ev, **Still photographer:** V. Murashko, **Lighting:** E. Paramonov, **Costumes:** Nelli Fomina, **Make-up:** V. Rudina, **Advisers:** Dr L. Lupichev, Dr I. Shklovsky,

Starring: Natal'ia Bondarchuk (Hari), Donatas Banionis (Kris Kelvin), Juri Jarvet (Snaut), Vladislav Dvorzhetsky (Berton), Nikolai Grin'ko (father), Anatolii Solonitsyn (Sartorius)
Supporting cast: O. Barnet (mother), V. Kerdimun, O. Kizilova (girl), T. Malykh, A. Misharin (chairman of debriefing), B. Oganesian, T. Ogorodnikova (Anna), S. Sarkisian (Gibarian), Iu. Semenov, V. Statsinsky, V. Sumenova, G. Teikh

Mirror (*Zerkalo*), 1974 (released 1975), 108 min. Colour (Sovcolour)

Production Company: Mosfilm (Fourth Creative Unit), **Producer:** E. Vaisberg, **Director:** Andrei Tarkovsky, **Assistants to the director:** L. Tarkovskaia, V. Kharchenko, M. Chugunova, **Assistant Director:** Iu. Kushnerev, **Screenplay:** Aleksandr Misharin, Andrei Tarkovsky, **Poems:** Arsenii Tarkovsky, **Director of photography:** Georgii Rerberg, assisted by V. Ivanov, **Cameramen:** A. Nikolaev, I. Shtan'ko, **Editing:** L. Feiginova, **Screenplay editors:** N. Boiarova, L. Lazarev, **Art Director:** Nikolai Dvigubsky, **Special effects:**

Iu. Potapov, **Stills photographer**: V. Murashko, **Composer**: Eduard Artem'ev, additional music by J. S. Bach, Giovanni Batista Pergolesi, Henry Purcell, **Costumes**: N. Fomina, **Sound**: Semen Litvinov, **Make-up**: V. Rudina, **Lighting**: V. Gusev, **Set construction**: A. Merkulov

Starring: Margarita Terekhova (Marusia, Aleksei's mother/Natal'ia, Aleksei's wife), Filip Iankovsky (Aleksei, age 5), Ignat Danil'tsev (Aleksei/Ignat, age 12), Oleg Iankovsky (Aleksei's father), Nikolai Grin'ko (colleague at the print shop), Alla Demidova (Liza), Iu. Nazarov (military instructor), Anatolii Solonitsyn (doctor), Innokentii Smoktunovsky (voice of Aleksei, the narrator), Larisa Tarkovskaia (doctor's wife), Mariia Tarkovskaia (Aleksei's mother as the old woman)
Supporting cast: Tamara Ogorodnikova (visitor), Iu. Sventikov, T. Reshetnikova, E. del Bosque, L. Correcher, A. Guttiérez, D. García, T. Pames, Teresa del Bosque, Tatiana del Bosque

Stalker, 1979, 161 min. Colour (Sovcolour and Eastmancolor), Cinemascope

Production Company: Mosfilm (Second Creative Unit), **Administrative support**: T. Aleksandrovskaia, V. Vdovina, M. Mosenkov, **Producer**: Aleksandra Demidova **Director**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Assistant Director**: Larisa Tarkovskaia, **Assistants to the director**: M. Chugunova, Evgenii Tsymbal, **Intern Director**: A. Agaronian, **Screenplay**: Arkadii Strugatsky, Boris Strugatsky based on their story 'The Roadside Picnic', **Screenplay Editor**: A. Stepanov, **Poetry**: Fedor Tiutchev, Arsenii Tarkovsky, **Director of photography**: Aleksandr Kniazhinsky, **Editor**: Liudmila Feiginova, **Assistants to the editor**: T. Alekseeva, V. Lobkova, **Music Editor**: R. Lukina, **Art Director**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Artists**: R. Safiullin, V. Fabrikov, **Camera operators**: N. Fudim, S. Naugol'nykh, **Assistants to the director of photography**: G. Verkhovsky, S. Zaitsev, **Conductor**: E. Khachaturian, **Composer**: Eduard Artem'ev, **Costumes**: N. Fomina, **Sound**: V. Sharun, **Light director**: L. Kamzin, **Light arrangement**: T. Maslennikova, **Set construction**: A. Merkulov, **Make-up**: V. L'vova

Starring: Alisa Freindlikh (Stalker's wife), Aleksandr Kaidanovsky (Stalker), Anatolii Solonitsyn (writer), Nikolai Grin'ko (professor)
Supporting cast: Natasha Abramova (Stalker's daughter), F. Iurna, E. Kostin, R. Rendi

Time of Travel (*Tempo di viaggio*), 1980/1983, 63 min. Colour (Technicolor)

Production Company: Genius srl/RAI 2, **Director**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Screenplay**: Tonino Guerra, **Director of photography**: Luciano Tovoli, **Cameraman**: Giancarlo Pancaldi, **Editor**: Franco Letti, **Assistant Editor**: Carlo D'Alessandro, **Sound**: Eugenio Rondani, **Mixing**: R. Checcacci, **Music selection**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **General Organization**: Franco Terilli, **Interpreter**: Lora Iablochkina

Nostalghia, 1983, 120 min. Colour (Technicolor)

Production Company: Rete 2 TV RAI in association with Sovinfilm (USSR) for Opera Film (Rome), **Executive Producer**: Renzo Rossellini, Manolo Bolognini, **Producer**: Francesco Casati, RAI **represented by**: Lorenzo Ostuni, **Production Supervisor**: Filippo Campus, Valentino Signoretti, **Production Secretary**: Eutizio di Salvatore, **Editorial Secretary**: Ilde Muscio, **Production Administrator**: Nestore Baratella, **Director**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Assistants to the director**: Norman Mozzato, Larisa Tarkovskaia, **Screenplay**: Andrei Tarkovsky, Tonino Guerra, **Italian editing**: Cesare Noia, **Director of photography**: Giuseppe Lanci, **Camera operator**: Giuseppe De Biasi, **Still photographer**: Bruno Bruni, **Editor**: Erminia Marani, Amedeo Salfa, **Assistant Editor**: Roberto Puglisi, **Art Director**: Andrea Crisanti, **Sets**: Mauro Passi, **Special effects**: Paolo Ricci, **Music** by Giuseppe Verdi, Richard Wagner, Ludwig von Beethoven, Claude Debussy, **Music consultant**: Gino Peguri, **Costumes**: Lina Nerli Taviani, Annamode 68, **Sound**: Remo Ugolinelli, **Dub mixing**: Danilo Moroni, **Director of dubbing**: Filippo Ottoni, **Dubbing assistant**: Ivana Fidele, **Dubbing consultant**: Denis Pekarev, **Sound effects**: Massimo Anzellotti, Luciano Anzellotti, **Make-up**: Giulio Mastrantonio, **Hair**: Iole Cecchini

Starring: Oleg Iankovsky (Andrei Gorchakov), Erland Josephson (Domenico), Domiziana Giordano (Eugenia), Patrizia Terreno (Gorchakov's wife), Laura De Marchi (woman with a towel), Delia Boccardo (Domenico's wife), Milena Vukotic (town worker)
Supporting cast: Alberto Canepa, Raffaele Di Mario, Rate Furlan, Livio Galassi, Piero Vida, Elena Magoia

Sacrifice (*Offret*), 1986, 149 min. Colour (Eastmancolor)

Production Company: Swedish Film Institute (Stockholm) and Argos Films (Paris) in association with Film Four International. Josephson & Nykvist, Sveriges Television/SVT 2, Sandrew Film and Theater. With the participation of the French Ministry of Culture. **Executive Producer**: Anna-Lena Wibom (Swedish Film Institute), **Producer**: Katinka Faragó (Faragó Film), **Production Manager**: Göran Lindberg, **Production Assistant**: Angeta Jansson, **Casting**: Priscilla John, Claire Denis, Françoise Menidrey, **Director**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Assistant to the director**: Kerstin Eriksdotter, Michał Leszczyłowski, **Screenplay**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Scriptgirl**: Anne von Sydow, **Director of photography**: Sven Nykvist, **Cameramen**: Lars Karlsson, Dan Myhrman, **Still Photographer**: Arne Carlsson, **Editor**: Andrei Tarkovsky, Michał Leszczyłowski, **Consulting Editor**: Henri Colpi, **Art Director**: Anna Asp, **Assistant Art Director**: Cecilia Iversen, **Set construction**: Harry Klava, **Props**: Jan Andersson, **Special Effects**: Svenska Stuntgruppen, Lars Höglund, Lars Palmqvist, **Music**: J. S. Bach; Swedish and Japanese traditional music, **Costumes**: Inger Pehrsson, **Costumes assistant**: Carina Dalunde, **Sound**: Owe Svensson, with Bo Persson, Lars Ulander, Christin Lohman, Wille Peterson-Berger, **Hair and make-up**: Kjell Gustavsson, Florence Fouquier, **Interpreter**: Layla Alexander, **Technical manager**: Kaj Larsen

Starring: Erland Josephson (Alexander), Susan Fleetwood (Adelaide), Allan Edwall (Otto), Gudrún Gisladóttir (Maria), Sven Wollter (Victor), Valérie Mairesse (Julia), Filippa Franzén (Marta), Tommy Kjellqvist (Little Man), Per Källman, Tommy Nordahl

2. Documented work on films by other directors

The Gate of Il'ich/I Am Twenty (*Zastava Il'icha/Mne dvadtsat' let*), 1961
Director: Marlen Khutsiev, **Screenplay**: Gennadii Shpalikov, Andrei Tarkovsky acted in a supporting role

Sergei Lazo, 1967
Director: Aleksandr Gordon, **Screenplay**: G. Malarchuk and Andrei Tarkovsky (uncredited). Andrei Tarkovsky also acted in a supporting role

As artistic director:
One Chance of a Thousand (*Odin shans iz tysiachi*), 1969
Director: Leonid Kocharian, **Screenplay**: Leonid Kocharian, A. Makarova, and Andrei Tarkovsky, **Artistic Director**: Andrei Tarkovsky

Beware, Snakes! (*Beregis', zmei!*), 1979
Director: Z. Sabitov, **Screenplay**: Andrei Tarkovsky

3. Work in other media

Turnabout (*Polnyi povorot krugom*, 1965), 55 min.
Radioplay, based on the story by William Faulkner, adaptation by Arsenii Tarkovsky
Director: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Bogart**: Aleksandr Lazarev, **Claude Hope**: Nikita Mikhalkov, **MacGinnis**: Lev Durov, **Ronnie**: Nikolai Prokof'ev, **Messenger**: Valentin Pechnikov, **Bar manager**: Petr Arzhakov, **Jean-Pierre**: Andrei Terëkhin, actors of assorted Moscow theatres, Gosteleradiofond D-73741

Hamlet by William Shakespeare
Theatre of the Lenin Komsomol (Moscow), **Premiere**: 8 February 1977, **Director**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Assistant Director**: Vladimir Sedov, **Stage design**: Tengiz Mirzashvili, **Music**: Eduard Artem'ev, **King Claudius**: V. Shiriaev, **Hamlet**: Anatolii Solonitsyn, **Queen Gertrude**: Margarita Terekhova, **Ophelia**: Inna Churikova

Boris Godunov by Modest Mussorgsky (edited David Lloyd-Jones)
Royal Opera at Covent Garden (London), **Premiere**: 31 October 1983
Conductor: Claudio Abbado, **Stage design**: Nicholas Dvigoubsky (Nikolai Dvigubsky) **Stage direction**: Andrei Tarkovsky, **Light direction**: Robert Bryan. **Boris**: Robert Lloyd, **Shuisky**: Philip Langridge, **Simpleton**: Patrick Power, **Pimen**: Gwynne Howell, **Grigorii**: Michel Svetlev, **Marina**: Eva Randová, **Hostess**: Elizabeth Bainbridge, **Xenia**: Fiona Kimm, **Nurse**: Marta Szirmay, **Fyodor**: John Rodgers, **Rangoni**: John Shirley-Quirk, **Misail**: Francis Egerton, **Varlaam**: Aage Hauglan

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